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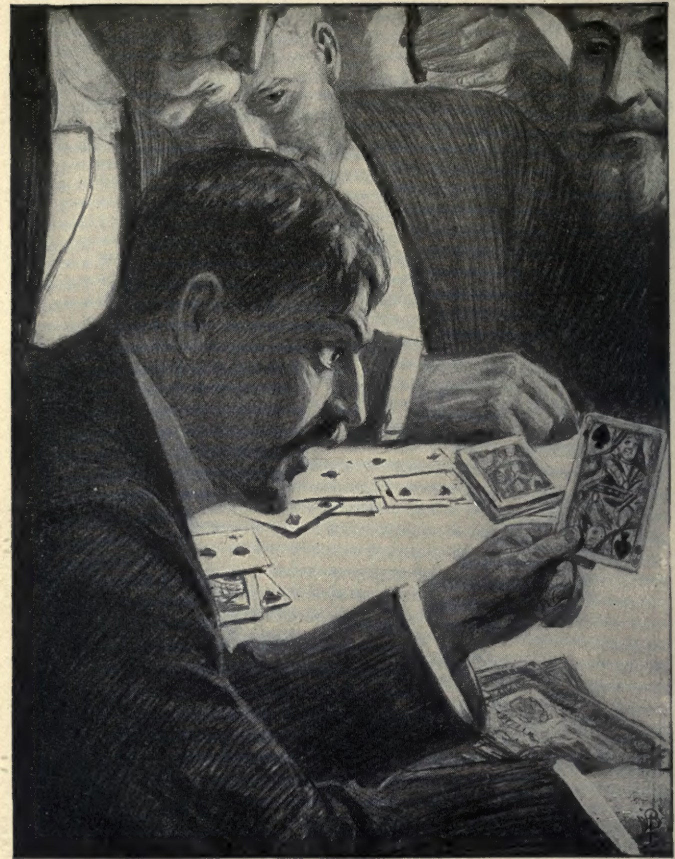

"'Your Queen Has Lost,' Said Chekalinsky Politely. Herman Started; instead of an Ace------"

To illustrate "The Queen of Spades," by Pushkin

THE CONTINENTAL CLASSICS

VOLUME XVIII

MYSTERY TALES

INCLUDING STORIES BY

FEODOR MIKHAILOVITCH DOSTOYEVSKY
JÖRGEN WILHELM BERGSÖE AND
BERNHARD SEVERIN INGEMANN

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Mystery Tales

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Russian Mystery Stories

Alexander Sergeievitch Pushkin

The Queen of Spades

I

THERE was a card party at the rooms of Naroumoff, of the Horse Guards. The long winter night passed away imperceptibly, and it was five o'clock in the morning before the company sat down to supper. Those who had won ate with a good appetite; the others sat staring absently at their empty plates. When the champagne appeared, however, the conversation became more animated, and all took a part in it.

"And how did you fare, Souirin?" asked the host.

"Oh, I lost, as usual. I must confess that I am unlucky. I play mirandole, I always keep cool, I never allow anything to put me out, and yet I always lose!"

"And you did not once allow yourself to be tempted to back the red? Your firmness astonishes me."

"But what do you think of Hermann?" said one of the guests, pointing to a young engineer. "He has never had a card in his hand in his life, he has never in his life laid a wager; and yet he sits here till five o'clock in the morning watching our play."

"Play interests me very much," said Hermann, "but I am not in the position to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous."

"Hermann is a German; he is economical—that is all!" observed Tomsky. "But if there is one person that I cannot understand, it is my grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedorovna!"

"How so?" inquired the guests.

"I cannot understand," continued Tomsky, "how it is that my grandmother does not punt."

"Then you do not know the reason why?"

"No, really; I haven't the faintest idea. But let me tell you the story. You must know that about sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris, where she created quite a sensation. People used to run after her to catch a glimpse of the 'Muscovite Venus.' Richelieu made love to her, and my grandmother maintains that he almost blew out his brains in consequence of her cruelty. At that time ladies used to play at faro. On one occasion at the Court, she lost a very considerable sum to the Duke of Orleans. On returning home, my grandmother removed the patches from her face, took off her hoops, informed my grandfather of her loss at the gaming-table, and ordered him to pay the money. My deceased grandfather, as far as I remember, was a sort of house-steward to my grandmother. He dreaded her like fire; but, on hearing of such a heavy loss, he almost went out of his mind. He calculated the various sums she had lost, and pointed out to her that in six months she had spent half a million of francs; that neither their Moscow nor Saratoff estates were in Paris; and, finally, refused point-blank to pay the debt. My grandmother gave him a box on the ear and slept by herself as a sign of her displeasure. The next day she sent for her husband, hoping that this domestic punishment had produced an effect upon him, but she found him inflexible. For the first time in her life she entered into reasonings and explanations with him, thinking to be able to convince him by pointing out to him that there are debts and debts, and that there is a great difference between a prince and a coachmaker.

"But it was all in vain, my grandfather still remained obdurate. But the matter did not rest there. My grandmother did not know what to do. She had shortly before become acquainted with a very remarkable man. You have heard of Count St. Germain, about whom so many marvelous stories are told. You know that he represented himself as the Wandering Jew, as the discoverer of the elixir of life, of the philosopher's stone, and so forth. Some laughed at him as a charlatan; but Casnova, in his memoirs, says that he was a spy. But be that as it may, St. Germain, in spite of the mystery surrounding him, was a very fascinating person, and was much sought after in the best circles of society. Even to this day my grandmother retains an affectionate recollection of him, and becomes quite angry if anyone speaks disrespectfully of him. My grandmother knew that St. Germain had large sums of money at his disposal. She resolved to have recourse to him, and she wrote a letter to him asking him to come to her without delay. The queer old man immediately waited upon her, and found her overwhelmed with grief. She described to him in the blackest colors the barbarity of her husband, and ended by declaring that her whole hope depended upon his friendship and amiability.

" St. Germain reflected.

" ' I could advance you the sum you want,' said he, ' but I know that you would not rest easy until you had paid me back, and I should not like to bring fresh troubles upon you. But there is another way of getting out of your difficulty: you can win back your money.'

" ' But, my dear Count,' replied my grandmother, ' I tell you that I haven't any money left! '

" ' Money is not necessary,' replied St. Germain, ' be pleased to listen to me.'

" Then he revealed to her a secret, for which each of us would give a good deal."

The young officers listened with increased attention. Tomsky lit his pipe, puffed away for a moment, and then continued:

" That same evening my grandmother went to Versailles to the *jeu de la reine*. The Duke of Orleans kept the bank; my grandmother excused herself in an offhanded manner for not having yet paid her debt by inventing some little story, and then began to play against him. She chose three cards and played them one after the other; all three won sonika,* and my grandmother recovered every farthing that she lost."

"Mere chance!" said one of the guests.

"A tale!" observed Hermann.

"Perhaps they were marked cards!" said a third.

"I do not think so," replied Tomsky, gravely.

"What!" said Naroumoff, "you have a grandmother who knows how to hit upon three lucky cards in succession, and you have never yet succeeded in getting the secret of it out of her?"

"That's the deuce of it!" replied Tomsky, "she had four sons, one of whom was my father; all four were determined gamblers, and yet not to one of them did she ever reveal her secret, although it would not have been a bad thing either for them or for me. But this is what I heard from my uncle, Count Ivan Ilitch, and he assured me, on his honor, that it was true. The late Chaplitsky—the same who died in poverty after having squandered millions—once lost, in his youth, about three hundred thousand roubles—to Zoritch, if I remember rightly. He was in despair. My grandmother, who was always very severe upon the extravagance of young men, took pity, however, upon Chaplitsky. She gave him three cards telling him to play them one after the other, at the same time exacting from him a solemn promise that he would never play at cards again as long as he lived. Chaplitsky then went to his victorious opponent, and they began a fresh game. On the first card he staked fifty thousand roubles, and won sonika; he doubled the stake, and won again; till at last, by pursuing the same tactics, he won back more than he had lost."

"But it is time to go to bed, it is a quarter to six already."

And, indeed, it was already beginning to dawn; the young men emptied their glasses and then took leave of each other.

---

*Said of a card when it wins or loses in the quickest possible time.

II

The old Countess A—— was seated in her dressing-room in front of her looking-glass. Three waiting maids stood around her. One held a small pot of rouge, another a box of hairpins, and the third a tall cap with bright red ribbons. The Countess had no longer the slightest pretensions to beauty, but she still preserved the habits of her youth, dressed in strict accordance with the fashion of seventy years before, and made as long and as careful a toilette as she would have done sixty years previously. Near the window, at an embroidery frame, sat a young lady, her ward.

"Good-morning, grandmamma," said a young officer, entering the room. "*Bonjour,* Mademoiselle Lise. Grandmamma, I want to ask you something."

"What is it, Paul?"

"I want you to let me introduce one of my friends to you, and to allow me to bring him to the ball on Friday."

"Bring him direct to the ball and introduce him to me there. Were you at B——'s yesterday?"

"Yes; everything went off very pleasantly, and dancing was kept up until five o'clock. How charming Eletskaia was!"

"But, my dear, what is there charming about her? Isn't she like her grandmother, the Princess Daria Petrovna? By the way, she must be very old, the Princess Daria Petrovna?"

"How do you mean, old?" cried Tomsky, thoughtlessly, "she died seven years ago."

The young lady raised her head, and made a sign to the young officer. He then remembered that the old Countess was never to be informed of the death of her contemporaries, and he bit his lips. But the old Countess heard the news with the greatest indifference.

"Dead!" said she, "and I did not know it. We were appointed maids of honor at the same time, and when we were presented to the Empress——"

And the Countess for the hundredth time related to her grandson one of her anecdotes.

"Come, Paul," said she, when she had finished her story, "help me to get up. Lizanka,* where is my snuffbox?"

And the Countess with her three maids went behind a screen to finish her toilette. Tomsky was left alone with the young lady.

"Who is the gentleman you wish to introduce to the Countess?" asked Lizaveta Ivanovna in a whisper.

"Naroumoff. Do you know him?"

"No. Is he a soldier or a civilian?"

"A soldier."

"Is he in the Engineers?"

"No, in the Cavalry. What made you think that he was in the Engineers?"

The young lady smiled, but made no reply.

"Paul," cried the Countess from behind the screen, "send me some new novel, only pray don't let it be one of the present day style."

"What do you mean, grandmother?"

"That is, a novel, in which the hero strangles neither his father nor his mother, and in which there are no drowned bodies. I have a great horror of drowned persons."

"There are no such novels nowadays. Would you like a Russian one?"

"Are there any Russian novels? Send me one, my dear, pray send me one!"

"Good-by, grandmother. I am in a hurry. . . . Good-by, Lizavetta Ivanovna. What made you think that Naroumoff was in the Engineers?"

And Tomsky left the boudoir.

Lizaveta Ivanovna was left alone. She laid aside her work, and began to look out of the window. A few moments afterwards, at a corner house on the other side of the street, a young officer appeared. A deep flush covered her cheeks; she took up her work again, and bent her head down over the frame. At the same moment the Countess returned, completely dressed.

---

* Diminutive of Lizaveta (Elizabeth).

"Order the carriage, Lizaveta," said she, "we will go out for a drive."

Lizaveta rose from the frame, and began to arrange her work.

"What is the matter with you, my child, are you deaf?" cried the Countess. "Order the carriage to be got ready at once."

"I will do so this moment," replied the young lady, hastening into the anteroom.

A servant entered and gave the Countess some books from Prince Paul Alexandrovitch.

"Tell him that I am much obliged to him," said the Countess. "Lizaveta! Lizaveta! where are you running to?"

"I am going to dress."

"There is plenty of time, my dear. Sit down here. Open the first volume and read to me aloud."

Her companion took the book and read a few lines.

"Louder," said the Countess. "What is the matter with you, my child? Have you lost your voice? Wait—— Give me that footstool—a little nearer—that will do!"

Lizaveta read two more pages. The Countess yawned.

"Put the book down," said she, "what a lot of nonsense! Send it back to Prince Paul with my thanks. . . . But where is the carriage?"

"The carriage is ready," said Lizaveta, looking out into the street.

"How is it that you are not dressed?" said the Countess. "I must always wait for you. It is intolerable, my dear!"

Liza hastened to her room. She had not been there two minutes before the Countess began to ring with all her might. The three waiting-maids came running in at one door, and the valet at another.

"How is it that you cannot hear me when I ring for you?" said the Countess. "Tell Lizaveta Ivanovna that I am waiting for her."

Lizaveta returned with her hat and cloak on.

"At last you are here!" said the Countess. "But why such an elaborate toilette? Whom do you intend to captivate? What sort of weather is it? It seems rather windy."

"No, your Ladyship, it is very calm," replied the valet.

"You never think of what you are talking about. Open the window. So it is; windy and bitterly cold. Unharness the horses, Lizaveta, we won't go out—there was no need to deck yourself like that."

"What a life is mine!" thought Lizaveta Ivanovna.

And, in truth, Lizaveta Ivanovna was a very unfortunate creature. "The bread of the stranger is bitter," says Dante, "and his staircase hard to climb." But who can know what the bitterness of dependence is so well as the poor companion of an old lady of quality? The Countess A—— had by no means a bad heart, but she was capricious, like a woman who had been spoiled by the world, as well as being avaricious and egotistical, like all old people, who have seen their best days, and whose thoughts are with the past, and not the present. She participated in all the vanities of the great world, went to balls, where she sat in a corner, painted and dressed in old-fashioned style, like a deformed but indispensable ornament of the ballroom; all the guests on entering approached her and made a profound bow, as if in accordance with a set ceremony, but after that nobody took any further notice of her. She received the whole town at her house, and observed the strictest etiquette, although she could no longer recognize the faces of people. Her numerous domestics, growing fat and old in her antechamber and servants' hall, did just as they liked, and vied with each other in robbing the aged Countess in the most bare-faced manner. Lizaveta Ivanovna was the martyr of the household. She made tea, and was reproached with using too much sugar; she read novels aloud to the Countess, and the faults of the author were visited upon her head; she accompanied the Countess in her walks, and was held answerable for the weather or the state of the pavement. A salary was attached to the post, but she very rarely received it, although she was expected to dress like everybody else, that is to say, like very few indeed. In society she played the most pitiable rôle. Everybody knew her, and nobody paid her any attention. At balls she danced only when a partner was wanted, and ladies would only take hold of her arm when it was necessary to lead her out of the room to attend to their dresses. She was very self-conscious, and felt her position keenly, and she looked about her with impatience for a deliverer to come to her rescue; but the young men, calculating in their giddiness, honored her with but very little attention, although Lizaveta Ivanovna was a hundred times prettier than the bare-faced, cold-hearted marriageable girls around whom they hovered. Many a time did she quietly slink away from the glittering, but wearisome, drawing-room, to go and cry in her own poor little room, in which stood a screen, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass, and a painted bedstead, and where a tallow candle burnt feebly in a copper candle-stick.

One morning—this was about two days after the evening party described at the beginning of this story, and a week previous to the scene at which we have just assisted—Lizaveta Ivanovna was seated near the window at her embroidery frame, when, happening to look out into the street, she caught sight of a young Engineer officer, standing motionless with his eyes fixed upon her window. She lowered her head, and went on again with her work. About five minutes afterwards she looked out again—the young officer was still standing in the same place. Not being in the habit of coquetting with passing officers, she did not continue to gaze out into the street, but went on sewing for a couple of hours, without raising her head. Dinner was announced. She rose up and began to put her embroidery away, but glancing casually out of the window, she perceived the officer again. This seemed to her very strange. After dinner she went to the window with a certain feeling of uneasiness, but the officer was no longer there—and she thought no more about him.

A couple of days afterwards, just as she was stepping into the carriage with the Countess, she saw him again. He was standing close behind the door, with his face half-concealed by his fur collar, but his dark eyes sparkled beneath his cap. Lizaveta felt alarmed, though she knew not why, and she trembled as she seated herself in the carriage.

On returning home, she hastened to the window—the officer was standing in his accustomed place, with his eyes fixed upon her. She drew back, a prey to curiosity, and agitated by a feeling which was quite new to her.

From that time forward not a day passed without the young officer making his appearance under the window at the customary hour, and between him and her there was established a sort of mute acquaintance. Sitting in her place at work, she used to feel his approach, and, raising her head, she would look at him longer and longer each day. The young man seemed to be very grateful to her; she saw with the sharp eye of youth, how a sudden flush covered his pale cheeks each time that their glances met. After about a week she commenced to smile at him. . . .

When Tomsky asked permission of his grandmother, the Countess, to present one of his friends to her, the young girl's heart beat violently. But hearing that Naroumoff was not an Engineer, she regretted that by her thoughtless question, she had betrayed her secret to the volatile Tomsky.

Hermann was the son of a German who had become a naturalized Russian, and from whom he had inherited a small capital. Being firmly convinced of the necessity of preserving his independence, Hermann did not touch his private income, but lived on his pay, without allowing himself the slightest luxury. Moreover, he was reserved and ambitious, and his companions rarely had an opportunity of making merry at the expense of his extreme parsimony. He had strong passions and an ardent imagination, but his firmness of disposition preserved him from the ordinary errors of young men. Thus, though a gamester at heart, he never touched a card, for he considered his position did not allow him—as he said—"to risk the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous," yet he would sit for nights together at the card table and follow with feverish anxiety the different turns of the game.

The story of the three cards had produced a powerful impression upon his imagination, and all night long he could think of nothing else. "If," he thought to himself the following evening, as he walked along the streets of St. Petersburg, "if the old Countess would not reveal her secret to me! If she would only tell me the names of the three winning cards. Why should I not try my fortune? I must get introduced to her and win her favor—become her lover. . . . But all that will take time, and she is eighty-seven years old. She might be dead in a week, in a couple of days even. But the story itself? Can it really be true? No! Economy, temperance, and industry; those are my three winning cards; by means of them I shall be able to double my capital—increase it sevenfold, and procure for myself ease and independence."

Musing in this manner, he walked on until he found himself in one of the principal streets of St. Petersburg, in front of a house of antiquated architecture. The street was blocked with equipages; carriages one after the other drew up in front of the brilliantly illuminated doorway. At one moment there stepped out onto the pavement the well-shaped little foot of some young beauty, at another the heavy boot of a cavalry officer, and then the silk stockings and shoes of a member of the diplomatic world. Fur and cloaks passed in rapid succession before the gigantic porter at the entrance. Hermann stopped. "Whose house is this?" he asked of the watchman at the corner.

"The Countess A——'s," replied the watchman.

Hermann started. The strange story of the three cards again presented itself to his imagination. He began walking up and down before the house, thinking of its owner and her strange secret. Returning late to his modest lodging, he could not go to sleep for a long time, and when at last he did doze off, he could dream of nothing but cards, green tables, piles of banknotes, and heaps of ducats. He played one card after the other, winning uninterruptedly, and then he gathered up the gold and filled his pockets with the notes. When he woke up late the next morning, he sighed over the loss of his imaginary wealth, and then sallying out into the town, he found himself once more in front of the Countess's residence. Some unknown power seemed to have attracted him thither. He stopped and looked up at the windows. At one of these he saw a head with luxuriant black hair, which was bent down, probably over some book or an embroidery frame. The head was raised. Hermann saw a fresh complexion, and a pair of dark eyes. That moment decided his fate.

III

LIZAVETA IVANOVNA had scarcely taken off her hat and cloak, when the Countess sent for her, and again ordered her to get the carriage ready. The vehicle drew up before the door, and they prepared to take their seats. Just at the moment when two footmen were assisting the old lady to enter the carriage, Lizaveta saw her Engineer standing close beside the wheel; he grasped her hand; alarm caused her to lose her presence of mind, and the young man disappeared—but not before he had left a letter between her fingers. She concealed it in her glove, and during the whole of the drive she neither saw nor heard anything. It was the custom of the Countess, when out for an airing in her carriage, to be constantly asking such questions as "Who was that person that met us just now? What is the name of this bridge? What is written on that signboard?" On this occasion, however, Lizaveta returned such vague and absurd answers, that the Countess became angry with her.

"What is the matter with you, my dear?" she exclaimed. "Have you taken leave of your senses, or what is it? Do you not hear me or understand what I say? Heaven be thanked, I am still in my right mind and speak plainly enough!"

Lizaveta Ivanovna did not hear her. On returning home she ran to her room, and drew the letter out of her glove: it was not sealed. Lizaveta read it. The letter contained a declaration of love; it was tender, respectful, and copied word for word from a German novel. But Lizaveta did not know anything of the German language, and she was quite delighted.

For all that, the letter caused her to feel exceedingly uneasy. For the first time in her life she was entering into secret and confidential relations with a young man. His boldness alarmed her. She reproached herself for her imprudent behavior, and knew not what to do. Should she cease to sit at the window, and, by assuming an appearance of indifference towards him, put a check upon the young officer's desire for further acquaintance with her? Should she send his letter back to him, or should she answer him in a cold and decided manner? There was nobody to whom she could turn in her perplexity, for she had neither female friend nor adviser. At length she resolved to reply to him.

She sat down at her little writing table, took pen and paper, and began to think. Several times she began her letter and then tore it up; the way she had expressed herself seemed to her either too inviting or too cold and decisive. At last she succeeded in writing a few lines with which she felt satisfied.

"I am convinced," she wrote, "that your intentions are honorable, and that you do not wish to offend me by any imprudent behavior, but our acquaintance must not begin in such a manner. I return you your letter, and I hope that I shall never have any cause to complain of this undeserved slight."

The next day, as soon as Hermann made his appearance, Lizaveta rose from her embroidery, went into the drawing-room, opened the ventilator, and threw the letter into the street, trusting that the young officer would have the perception to pick it up.

Hermann hastened forward, picked it up, and then repaired to a confectioner's shop. Breaking the seal of the envelope, he found inside it his own letter and Lizaveta's reply. He had expected this, and he returned home, his mind deeply occupied with his intrigue.

Three days afterwards a bright-eyed young girl from a milliner's establishment brought Lizaveta a letter. Lizaveta opened it with great uneasiness, fearing that it was a demand for money, when, suddenly, she recognized Hermann's handwriting.

"You have made a mistake, my dear," said she. "This letter is not for me."

"Oh, yes, it is for you," replied the girl, smiling very knowingly. "Have the goodness to read it."

Lizaveta glanced at the letter. Hermann requested an interview.

"It cannot be," she cried, alarmed at the audacious request and the manner in which it was made. "This letter is certainly not for me," and she tore it into fragments.

"If the letter was not for you, why have you torn it up?" said the girl. "I should have given it back to the person who sent it."

"Be good enough, my dear," said Lizaveta, disconcerted by this remark, "not to bring me any more letters for the future, and tell the person who sent you that he ought to be ashamed."

But Hermann was not the man to be thus put off. Every day Lizaveta received from him a letter, sent now in this way, now in that. They were no longer translated from the German. Hermann wrote them under the inspiration of passion, and spoke in his own language, and they bore full testimony to the inflexibility of his desire, and the disordered condition of his uncontrollable imagination. Lizaveta no longer thought of sending them back to him; she became intoxicated with them, and began to reply to them, and little by little her answers became longer and more affectionate. At last she threw out of the window to him the following letter:

"This evening there is going to be a ball at the Embassy.

The Countess will be there. We shall remain until two o'clock. You have now an opportunity of seeing me alone. As soon as the Countess is gone, the servants will very probably go out, and there will be nobody left but the Swiss, but he usually goes to sleep in his lodge. Come about half-past eleven. Walk straight upstairs. If you meet anybody in the anteroom, ask if the Countess is at home. You will be told 'No,' in which case there will be nothing left for you to do but to go away again. But it is most probable that you will meet nobody. The maidservants will all be together in one room. On leaving the anteroom, turn to the left, and walk straight on until you reach the Countess's bedroom. In the bedroom, behind a screen, you will find two doors: the one on the right leads to a cabinet, which the Countess never enters; the one on the left leads to a corridor, at the end of which is a little winding staircase; this leads to my room."

Hermann trembled like a tiger as he waited for the appointed time to arrive. At ten o'clock in the evening he was already in front of the Countess's house. The weather was terrible; the wind blew with great violence, the sleety snow fell in large flakes, the lamps emitted a feeble light, the streets were deserted; from time to time a sledge drawn by a sorry-looking hack, passed by on the lookout for a belated passenger. Hermann was enveloped in a thick overcoat, and felt neither wind nor snow.

At last the Countess's carriage drew up. Hermann saw two footmen carry out in their arms the bent form of the old lady, wrapped in sable fur, and immediately behind her, clad in a warm mantle, and with her head ornamented with a wreath of fresh flowers, followed Lizaveta. The door was closed. The carriage rolled heavily away through the yielding snow. The porter shut the street door, the windows became dark.

Hermann began walking up and down near the deserted house; at length he stopped under a lamp, and glanced at his watch: it was twenty minutes past eleven. He remained standing under the lamp, his eyes fixed upon the watch impatiently waiting for the remaining minutes to pass. At half-past eleven precisely Hermann ascended the steps of the house and made his way into the brightly-illuminated vestibule. The porter was not there. Hermann hastily ascended the staircase, opened the door of the anteroom, and saw a footman sitting asleep in an antique chair by the side of a lamp. With a light, firm step Hermann passed by him. The drawing-room and dining-room were in darkness, but a feeble reflection penetrated thither from the lamp in the anteroom.

Hermann reached the Countess's bedroom. Before a shrine, which was full of old images, a golden lamp was burning. Faded stuffed chairs and divans with soft cushions stood in melancholy symmetry around the room, the walls of which were hung with china silk. On one side of the room hung two portraits painted in Paris by Madame Lebrun. One of these represented a stout, red-faced man of about forty years of age, in a bright green uniform, and with a star upon his breast; the other—a beautiful young woman, with an aquiline nose, forehead curls, and a rose in her powdered hair. In the corner stood porcelain shepherds and shepherdesses, dining-room clocks from the workshop of the celebrated Lefroy, bandboxes, roulettes, fans, and the various playthings for the amusement of ladies that were in vogue at the end of the last century, when Montgolfier's balloons and Niesber's magnetism were the rage. Hermann stepped behind the screen. At the back of it stood a little iron bedstead; on the right was the door which led to the cabinet; on the left, the other which led to the corridor. He opened the latter, and saw the little winding staircase which led to the room of the poor companion. But he retraced his steps and entered the dark cabinet.

The time passed slowly. All was still. The clock in the drawing-room struck twelve, the strokes echoed through the room one after the other, and everything was quiet again. Hermann stood leaning against the cold stove. He was calm, his heart beat regularly, like that of a man resolved upon a dangerous but inevitable undertaking. One o'clock in the morning struck; then two, and he heard the distant noise of carriage-wheels. An involuntary agitation took possession of him. The carriage drew near and stopped. He heard the sound of the carriage steps being let down. All was bustle within the house. The servants were running hither and thither, there was a confusion of voices, and the rooms were lit up. Three antiquated chambermaids entered the bedroom, and they were shortly afterwards followed by the Countess, who, more dead than alive, sank into a Voltaire armchair. Hermann peeped through a chink. Lizaveta Ivanovna passed close by him, and he heard her hurried steps as she hastened up the little spiral staircase. For a moment his heart was assailed by something like a pricking of conscience, but the emotion was only transitory, and his heart became petrified as before.

The Countess began to undress before her looking-glass. Her rose-bedecked cap was taken off, and then her powdered wig was removed from off her white and closely cut hair. Hairpins fell in showers around her. Her yellow satin dress, brocaded with silver, fell down at her swollen feet.

Hermann was a witness of the repugnant mysteries of her toilette; at last the Countess was in her night-cap and dressing-gown, and in this costume, more suitable to her age, she appeared less hideous and deformed.

Like all old people, in general, the Countess suffered from sleeplessness. Having undressed, she seated herself at the window in a Voltaire armchair, and dismissed her maids. The candles were taken away, and once more the room was left with only one lamp burning in it. The Countess sat there looking quite yellow, mumbling with her flaccid lips and swaying to and fro. Her dull eyes expressed complete vacancy of mind, and, looking at her, one would have thought that the rocking of her body was not a voluntary action of her own, but was produced by the action of some concealed galvanic mechanism.

Suddenly the death-like face assumed an inexplicable expression. The lips ceased to tremble, the eyes became animated: before the Countess stood an unknown man.

"Do not be alarmed, for Heaven's sake, do not be alarmed!" said he in a low but distinct voice. "I have no intention of doing you any harm; I have only come to ask a favor of you."

The old woman looked at him in silence, as if she had not heard what he had said. Hermann thought that she was deaf, and, bending down towards her ear, he repeated what he had said. The aged Countess remained silent as before.

"You can insure the happiness of my life," continued Hermann, "and it will cost you nothing. I know that you can name three cards in order——"

Hermann stopped. The Countess appeared now to understand what he wanted; she seemed as if seeking for words to reply.

"It was a joke," she replied at last. "I assure you it was only a joke."

"There is no joking about the matter," replied Hermann, angrily. "Remember Chaplitsky, whom you helped to win."

The Countess became visibly uneasy. Her features expressed strong emotion, but they quickly resumed their former immobility.

"Can you not name me these three winning cards?" continued Hermann.

The Countess remained silent; Hermann continued:

"For whom are you preserving your secret? For your grandsons? They are rich enough without it, they do not know the worth of money. Your cards would be of no use to a spendthrift. He who cannot preserve his paternal inheritance will die in want, even though he had a demon at his service. I am not a man of that sort. I know the value of money. Your three cards will not be thrown away upon me. Come!"

He paused and tremblingly awaited her reply. The Countess remained silent. Hermann fell upon his knees.

"If your heart has ever known the feeling of love," said he, "if you remember its rapture, if you have ever smiled at the cry of your new-born child, if any human feeling has ever entered into your breast, I entreat you by the feelings of a wife, a lover, a mother, by all that is most sacred in life, not to reject my prayer. Reveal to me your secret. Of what use is it to you? May be it is connected with some terrible sin, with the loss of eternal salvation, with some bargain with the devil. Reflect, you are old, you have not long to live—I am ready to take your sins upon my soul. Only reveal to me your secret. Remember that the happiness of a man is in your hands, that not only I, but my children and my grandchildren, will bless your memory and reverence you as a saint."

The old Countess answered not a word.

Hermann rose to his feet.

"You old hag!" he exclaimed, grinding his teeth, "then I will make you answer!" With these words he drew a pistol from his pocket. At the sight of the pistol, the Countess for the second time exhibited strong emotions. She shook her head, and raised her hands as if to protect herself from the shot. Then she fell backwards, and remained motionless.

"Come, an end to this childish nonsense!" said Hermann, taking hold of her hand. "I ask you for the last time: will you tell me the names of your three cards, or will you not?"

The Countess made no reply. Hermann perceived that she was dead!

IV

Lizaveta Ivanovna was sitting in her room, still in her ball dress, lost in deep thought. On returning home, she had hastily dismissed the chambermaid, who very reluctantly came forward to assist her, saying that she would undress herself, and with a trembling heart had gone up to her own room, expecting to find Hermann there, but yet hoping not to find him. At the first glance he was not there, and she thanked her fate for having prevented him keeping the appointment. She sat down without undressing, and began to call to mind all the circumstances which in a short time had carried her so far. It was not three weeks since the time when she had first seen the young officer from the window—and yet she was already in correspondence with him, and he had succeeded in inducing her to grant him a nocturnal interview. She knew his name only through his having written it at the bottom of some of his letters; she had never spoken to him, had never heard his voice, and had never heard him spoken of until that evening. But, strange to say, that very evening at the ball, Tomsky, being piqued with the young Princess Pauline N——, who, contrary to her usual custom, did not flirt with him, wished to revenge himself by assuming an air of indifference: he therefore engaged Lizaveta Ivanovna, and danced an endless mazurka with her. During the whole of the time he kept teasing her about her partiality for Engineer officers, he assured her that he knew far more than she imagined, and some of his jests were so happily aimed, that Lizaveta thought several times that her secret was known to him.

"From whom have you learned all this?" she asked, smiling.

"From a friend of a person very well known to you," replied Tomsky, "from a very distinguished man."

"And whom is this distinguished man?"

"His name is Hermann." Lizaveta made no reply, but her hands and feet lost all sense of feeling.

"This Hermann," continued Tomsky, "is a man of romantic personality. He has the profile of a Napoleon, and the soul of a Mephistopheles. I believe that he has at least three crimes upon his conscience. How pale you have become!"

"I have a headache. But what did this Hermann, or whatever his name is, tell you?"

"Hermann is very dissatisfied with his friend. He says that in his place he would act very differently. I even think that Hermann himself has designs upon you; at least, he listens very attentively to all that his friend has to say about you."

"And where has he seen me?"

"In church, perhaps; or on the parade. God alone knows where. It may have been in your room, while you were asleep, for there is nothing that he——"

Three ladies approaching him with the question: "oubli ou regret?" interrupted the conversation, which had become so tantalizingly interesting to Lizaveta.

The lady chosen by Tomsky was the Princess Pauline herself. She succeeded in effecting a reconciliation with him during the numerous turns of the dance, after which he conducted her to her chair. On returning to his place, Tomsky thought no more either of Hermann or Lizaveta. She longed to renew the interrupted conversation, but the mazurka came to an end, and shortly afterwards the old Countess took her departure.

Tomsky's words were nothing more than the customary small talk of the dance, but they sank deep into the soul of the young dreamer. The portrait, sketched by Tomsky, coincided with the picture she had formed within her own mind, and, thanks to the latest romances, the ordinary countenance of her admirer became invested with attributes capable of alarming her and fascinating her imagination at the same time. She was now sitting with her bare arms crossed, and with her head, still adorned with flowers, sunk upon her uncovered bosom. Suddenly the door opened and Hermann entered. She shuddered.

"Where were you?" she asked in a terrified whisper.

"In the old Countess's bedroom," replied Hermann. "I have just left her. The Countess is dead."

"My God! What do you say?"

"And I am afraid," added Hermann, "that I am the cause of her death."

Lizaveta looked at him, and Tomsky's words found an echo in her soul: "This man has at least three crimes upon his conscience!" Hermann sat down by the window near her, and related all that had happened.

Lizaveta listened to him in terror. So all those passionate letters, those ardent desires, this bold, obstinate pursuit—all this was not love! Money—that was what his soul yearned for! She could not satisfy his desire and make him happy. The poor girl had been nothing but the blind tool of a robber, of the murderer of her aged benefactress! She wept bitter tears of agonized repentance. Hermann gazed at her in silence; his heart, too, was a prey to violent emotion, but neither the tears of the poor girl, nor the wonderful charm of her beauty, enhanced by her grief, could produce any impression upon his hardened soul. He felt no pricking of conscience at the thought of the dead old woman. One thing only grieved him: the irreparable loss of the secret from which he had expected to obtain great wealth.

"You are a monster!" said Lizaveta at last.

"I did not wish for her death," replied Hermann, "my pistol was not loaded." Both remained silent. The day began to dawn. Lizaveta extinguished her candle, a pale light illumined her room. She wiped her tear-stained eyes, and raised them towards Hermann. He was sitting near the window, with his arms crossed, and with a fierce frown upon his forehead. In this attitude he bore a striking resemblance to the portrait of Napoleon. This resemblance struck Lizaveta even.

"How shall I get you out of the house?" said she at last. "I thought of conducting you down the secret staircase."

"I will go alone," he answered.

Lizaveta arose, took from her drawer a key, handed it to Hermann, and gave him the necessary instructions. Hermann pressed her cold, inert hand, kissed her bowed head, and left the room.

He descended the winding staircase, and once more entered the Countess's bedroom. The dead old lady sat as if petrified, her face expressed profound tranquillity. Hermann stopped before her, and gazed long and earnestly at her, as if he wished to convince himself of the terrible reality. At last he entered the cabinet, felt behind the tapestry for the door, and then began to descend the dark staircase, filled with strange emotions. "Down this very staircase," thought he, "perhaps coming from the very same room, and at this very same hour sixty years ago, there may have glided, in an embroidered coat, with his hair dressed *à l'oiseau royal,* and pressing to his heart his three-cornered hat, some young gallant who has long been mouldering in the grave, but the heart of his aged mistress has only today ceased to beat."

At the bottom of the staircase Hermann found a door, which he opened with a key, and then traversed a corridor which conducted him into the street.

V

THREE days after the fatal night, at nine o'clock in the morning, Hermann repaired to the Convent of ——, where the last honors were to be paid to the mortal remains of the old Countess. Although feeling no remorse, he could not altogether stifle the voice of conscience, which said to him: "You are the murderer of the old woman!" In spite of his entertaining very little religious belief, he was exceedingly superstitious; and believing that the dead Countess might exercise an evil influence on his life, he resolved to be present at her obsequies in order to implore her pardon.

The church was full. It was with difficulty that Hermann made his way through the crowd of people. The coffin was placed upon a rich catafalque beneath a velvet baldachin. The deceased Countess lay within it, with her hands crossed upon her breast, with a lace cap upon her head, and dressed in a white satin robe. Around the catafalque stood the members of her household; the servants in black caftans, with armorial ribbons upon their shoulders and candles in their hands; the relatives—children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—in deep mourning.

Nobody wept, tears would have been an affectation. The

Countess was so old that her death could have surprised nobody, and her relatives had long looked upon her as being out of the world. A famous preacher delivered the funeral sermon. In simple and touching words he described the peaceful passing away of the righteous, who had passed long years in calm preparation for a Christian end. " The angel of death found her," said the orator," engaged in pious meditation and waiting for the midnight bridegroom."

The service concluded amidst profound silence. The relatives went forward first to take a farewell of the corpse. Then followed the numerous guests, who had come to render the last homage to her who for so many years had been a participator in their frivolous amusements. After these followed the members of the Countess's household. The last of these an old woman of the same age as the deceased. Two young women led her forward by the hand. She had not strength enough to bow down to the ground—she merely shed a few tears, and kissed the cold hand of the mistress.

Herman now resolved to approach the coffin. He knelt down upon the cold stones, and remained in that position for some minutes; at last he arose as pale as the deceased Countess herself; he ascended the steps of the catafalque and bent over the corpse. . . . At that moment it seemed to him that the dead woman darted a mocking look at him and winked with one eye. Hermann started back, took a false step, and fell to the ground. Several persons hurried forward and raised him up. At the same moment Lizaveta Ivanovna was borne fainting into the porch of the church. This episode disturbed for some minutes the solemnity of the gloomy ceremony. Among the congregation arose a deep murmur, and a tall, thin chamberlain, a near relative of the deceased, whispered in the ear of an Englishman, who was standing near him, that the young officer was a natural son of the Countess, to which the Englishman coldly replied " Oh! "

During the whole of that day Hermann was strangely excited. Repairing to an out of the way restaurant to dine, he drank a great deal of wine, contrary to his usual custom, in the hope of deadening his inward agitation. But the wine only served to excite his imagination still more. On returning home he threw himself upon his bed without undressing, and fell into a deep sleep.

When he woke up it was already night, and the moon was shining into the room. He looked at his watch: it was a quarter to three. Sleep had left him; he sat down upon his bed, and thought of the funeral of the old Countess.

At that moment somebody in the street looked in at his window and immediately passed on again. Hermann paid no attention to this incident. A few moments afterwards he heard the door of his anteroom open. Hermann thought that it was his orderly, drunk as usual, returning from some nocturnal expedition, but presently he heard footsteps that were unknown to him: somebody was walking softly over the floor in slippers. The door opened, and a woman dressed in white entered the room. Hermann mistook her for his old nurse, and wondered what could bring her there at that hour of the night. But the white woman glided rapidly across the room and stood before him—and Hermann thought he recognized the Countess.

"I have come to you against my wish," she said in a firm voice, "but I have been ordered to grant your request. Three, seven, ace, will win for you if played in succession, but only on these conditions: that you do not play more than one card in twenty-four-hours, and that you never play again during the rest of your life. I forgive you my death, on condition that you marry my companion, Lizaveta Ivanovna."

With these words she turned round very quietly, walked with a shuffling gait towards the door, and disappeared. Hermann heard the street door open and shut, and again he saw someone look in at him through the window.

For a long time Hermann could not recover himself. He then rose up and entered the next room. His orderly was lying asleep upon the floor, and he had much difficulty in waking him. The orderly was drunk as usual, and no information could be obtained from him. The street door was locked. Hermann returned to his room, lit his candle, and wrote down all the details of his vision.

VI

Two fixed ideas can no more exist together in the moral world than two bodies can occupy one and the same physical world. "Three, seven, ace" soon drove out of Hermann's mind the thought of the dead Countess. "Three, seven, ace" were perpetually running through his head, and continually being repeated by his lips. If he saw a young girl, he would say: "How slender she is; quite like the three of hearts." If anybody asked "What is the time?" he would reply: "Five minutes to seven." Every stout man that he saw reminded him of the ace. "Three, seven, ace" haunted him in his sleep, and assumed all possible shapes. The threes bloomed before him in the forms of magnificent flowers, the sevens were represented by Gothic portals, and the aces became transformed into gigantic spiders. One thought alone occupied his whole mind—to make a profitable use of the secret which he had purchased so dearly. He thought of applying for a furlough so as to travel abroad. He wanted to go to Paris and tempt fortune in some gambling houses that abounded there. Chance spared him all this trouble.

There was in Moscow a society of rich gamesters, presided over by the celebrated Chekalinsky, who had passed all his life at the card table, and had amassed millions, accepting bills of exchange for his winnings, and paying his losses in ready money. His long experience secured for him the confidence of his companions, and his open house, his famous cook, and his agreeable and fascinating manners, gained for him the respect of the public. He came to St. Petersburg. The young men of the capital flocked to his rooms, forgetting balls for cards, and preferring the emotions of faro to the seductions of flirting. Naroumoff conducted Hermann to Chekalinsky's residence.

They passed through a suite of rooms, filled with attentive domestics. The place was crowded. Generals and Privy Counsellors were playing at whist, young men were lolling carelessly upon the velvet-covered sofas, eating ices and smoking pipes. In the drawing-room, at the head of a long table, around which were assembled about a score of players, sat the master of the house keeping the bank. He was a man of about sixty years of age, of a very dignified appearance; his head was covered with silvery white hair; his full, florid countenance expressed good-nature, and his eyes twinkled with a perpetual smile. Naroumoff introduced Hermann to him. Chekalinsky shook him by the hand in a friendly manner, requested him not to stand on ceremony, and then went on dealing.

The game occupied some time. On the table lay more than thirty cards. Chekalinsky paused after each throw, in order to give the players time to arrange their cards and note down their losses, listened politely to their requests, and more politely still, straightened the corners of cards that some player's hand had chanced to bend. At last the game was finished. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards, and prepared to deal again.

"Will you allow me to take a card?" said Hermann, stretching out his hand from behind a stout gentleman who was punting.

Chekalinsky smiled and bowed silently, as a sign of acquiescence. Naroumoff laughingly congratulated Hermann on his abjuration of that abstention from cards which he had practised for so long a period, and wished him a lucky beginning.

"Stake!" said Hermann, writing some figures with chalk on the back of his card.

"How much?" asked the banker, contracting the muscles of his eyes, "excuse me, I cannot see quite clearly."

"Forty-seven thousand roubles," replied Hermann. At these words every head in the room turned suddenly round, and all eyes were fixed upon Hermann.

"He has taken leave of his senses!" thought Naroumoff.

"Allow me to inform you," said Chekalinsky, with his eternal smile, "that you are playing very high; nobody here has ever staked more than two hundred and seventy-five roubles at once."

"Very well," replied Hermann, "but do you accept my card or not?"

Chekalinsky bowed in token of consent.

"I only wish to observe," said he, "that although I have the greatest confidence in my friends, I can only play against ready money. For my own part I am quite convinced that your word is sufficient, but for the sake of the order of the game, and to facilitate the reckoning up, I must ask you to put the money on your card."

Hermann drew from his pocket a bank-note, and handed it to Chekalinsky, who, after examining it in a cursory manner, placed it on Hermann's card.

He began to deal. On the right a nine turned up, and on the left a three.

"I have won!" said Hermann, showing his card.

A murmur of astonishment arose among the players. Chekalinsky frowned, but the smile quickly returned to his face. "Do you wish me to settle with you?" he said to Hermann.

"If you please," replied the latter.

Chekalinsky drew from his pocket a number of bank-notes and paid at once. Hermann took up his money and left the table. Naroumoff could not recover from his astonishment. Hermann drank a glass of lemonade and returned home.

The next evening he again repaired to Chekalinsky's. The host was dealing. Hermann walked up to the table; the punters immediately made room for him. Chekalinsky greeted him with a gracious bow.

Hermann waited for the next deal, took a card and placed upon it his forty-seven thousand roubles, together with his winnings of the previous evening.

Chekalinsky began to deal. A knave turned up on the right, a seven on the left.

Hermann showed his seven.

There was a general exclamation. Chekalinsky was evidently ill at ease, but he counted out the ninety-four thousand roubles and handed them over to Hermann, who pocketed them in the coolest manner possible, and immediately left the house.

The next evening Hermann appeared again at the table. Everyone was expecting him. The generals and privy counsellors left their whist in order to watch such extraordinary play. The young officers quitted their sofas, and even the servants crowded into the room. All pressed round Hermann. The other players left off punting, impatient to see how it would end. Hermann stood at the table, and prepared to play alone against the pale, but still smiling Chekalinsky. Each opened a pack of cards. Chekalinsky shuffled. Hermann took a card and covered it with a pile of bank-notes. It was like a duel. Deep silence reigned around.

Chekalinsky began to deal, his hands trembled. On the right a queen turned up, and on the left an ace.

"Ace has won!" cried Hermann, showing his card.

"Your queen has lost," said Chekalinsky, politely.

Hermann started; instead of an ace, there lay before him the queen of spades! He could not believe his eyes, nor could he understand how he had made such a mistake.

At that moment it seemed to him that the queen of spades smiled ironically, and winked her eye at him. He was struck by her remarkable resemblance. . . .

"The old Countess!" he exclaimed, seized with terror. Chekalinsky gathered up his winnings. For some time Hermann remained perfectly motionless. When at last he left the table, there was a general commotion in the room.

"Splendidly punted!" said the players. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards afresh, and the game went on as usual.

. . . .

Hermann went out of his mind, and is now confined in room number seventeen of the Oboukhoff Hospital. He never answers any questions, but he constantly mutters with unusual rapidity: "Three, seven, ace! Three, seven, queen!"

Lizaveta Ivanovna has married a very amiable young man, a son of the former steward of the old Countess. He is in the service of the State somewhere, and is in receipt of a good income. Lizaveta is also supporting a poor relative.

Tomsky has been promoted to the rank of captain, and has become the husband of the Princess Pauline.

Vera Jelihovsky

The General's Will

I

IT happened in winter, just before the holidays. Ivan Feodorovitch Lobnitchenko, the lawyer, whose office is in one of the main streets of St. Petersburg, was called hurriedly to witness the last will and testament of one at the point of death. The sick man was not strictly a client of Ivan Feodorovitch; under other circumstances, he might have refused to make this late call, after a day's heavy toil . . . but the dying man was an aristocrat and a millionaire, and such as he meet no refusals, whether in life, or, much more, at the moment of death.

Lobnitchenko, taking a secretary and everything necessary, with a sigh scratched himself behind the ear, and thrusting aside the thought of the delightful evening at cards that awaited him, set out to go to the sick man.

General Iuri Pavlovitch Nasimoff was far gone. Even the most compassionate doctors did not give him many days to live, when he finally decided to destroy the will which he had made long ago, not in St. Petersburg, but in the provincial city where he had played the Tsar for so many years. The general had come to the capital for a time, and had lain down—to rise no more.

This was the opinion of the physicians, and of most of those about him; the sick man himself was unwilling to admit it. He was a stalwart-hearted and until recently a stalwart-bodied old man, tall, striking, with an energetic face, and a piercing, masterful glance, hard to forget, even if you saw him only once.

He was lying on the sofa, in a richly furnished hotel suite, consisting of three of the best rooms. He received the lawyer gayly enough. He himself explained the circumstances to him, though every now and then compelled to stop by a paroxysm of pain, with difficulty repressing the groans which almost escaped him, in spite of all his efforts. During these heavy moments, Ivan Feodorovitch raised his eyes buried in fat to the sick man's face, and his plump little features were convulsed in sympathy with the sufferer's pain. As soon as the courageous old man, fighting hard with the paroxysms of pain, had got the better of them, taking his hands from his contorted face, and drawing a painful breath, he began anew to explain his will. Lobnitchenko dropped his eyes again and became all attention.

The general explained in detail to the lawyer. He had been married twice, and had three children, a son and a daughter from his first marriage, who had long ago reached adultship, and a nine-year-old daughter from his second marriage. His second wife and daughter he expected every day; they were abroad, but would soon return. His elder daughter would also probably come.

The lawyer was not acquainted with Nazimoff's family; indeed he had never before seen the general, though, like all Russia, he knew of him by repute. But judging from the tone of contempt or of pity with which he spoke of his second wife or her daughter, the lawyer guessed at once that the general's home life was not happy. The further explanations of the sick man convinced him of this. A new will was to be drawn up, directly contrary to the will signed six years before, which bequeathed to his second wife, Olga Vseslavovna, unlimited authority over their little daughter, and her husband's entire property. In the first will he had left nearly everything, with the exception of the family estate, which he did not feel justified in taking from his son, to his second wife and her daugther. Now he wished to restore to his elder children the rights which he had deprived them of, and especially to his eldest daughter, Anna Iurievna Borissova, who was not even mentioned in the first will. In the new will, with the exception of the seventh part, the widow's share, he divided the whole of his land and capital between his children equally; and he further appointed a strict guardianship over the property of his little daughter, Olga Iurievna.

The will was duly arranged, drawn up and witnessed, and after the three witnesses had signed it, it was left, by the general's wish, in his own keeping.

"I will send it to you to take care of," he said to the lawyer. "It will be safer in your hands than here, in my temporary quarters. But first I wish to read it to my wife, and . . . to my eldest daughter . . . if she arrives in time."

The lawyer and the priest, who was one of the witnesses, were already preparing to take leave of the general, when voices and steps were heard in the corridor; a footman's head appeared through the door, calling the doctor hurriedly forth. It appeared that the general's lady had arrived suddenly, without letting anyone know by telegram that she was coming.

The doctor hastily slipped out of the room; he feared the result of emotion on the sick man, and wished to warn the general's wife of his grave danger, but the sick man noticed the move, and it was impossible to guard him against disturbance.

"What is going on there?" he asked. "What are you mumbling about, Edouard Vicentevitch? Tell me what is the matter? Is it my daughter?"

"Your excellency, I beg of you to take care of yourself!" the doctor was beginning, evidently quite familiar with the general's family affairs, and therefore dreading the meeting of husband and wife. "It is not Anna Iurievna. . . ."

"Aha!" the sick man interrupted him; "she has come? Very well. Let her come in. Only the little one . . . I don't wish her to come . . . to-day."

Suffering was visible in his eyes, this time not bodily suffering.

The door opened, with the rustling of a silk dress. A tall, well-developed, and decidedly handsome woman appeared on the threshhold. She glanced at the pain-stricken face, which smiled contemptuously toward her. In a moment she was beside the general, kneeling beside him on the carpet, bending close to him, and pressing his hand, as she repeated in a despairing whisper:

"Oh, Georges! Georges! Is it really you, my poor friend?"

It would be hard to define the expression of rapidly changing emotions which passed over the sick man's face, which made his breast heave, and his great heart quiver and tremble painfully. Displeasure and pity, sympathy and contempt, anger and grief, all were expressed in the short, sharp, bitter laugh, and the few words which escaped his lips when he saw his little daughter timidly following her mother into his room.

"Do not teach her to lie!" and he nodded toward the child, and turned toward the wall, with an expression of pain and pity on his face. The lawyer and the priest hastened to take their leave and disappear.

"Ah! Sinners! sinners!" muttered the latter, as he descended the stairs.

"Things are not in good shape between them?" asked Lobnitchenko. "They don't get on well together?"

"How should they be in good shape, when he came here to get a divorce?" whispered the priest, shaping his fur cap. "But God decided otherwise. Even without a divorce, he will be separated forever from his wife!"

"I don't believe he is so very far gone. He is a stalwart old man. Perhaps he will pull through," went on the man of law.

"God's hand is over all," answered the priest, shrugging his shoulders. And so they went their different ways.

II

"OLGA!" cried the sick man, without turning round, and feeling near him the swift movement of his wife, he pushed her away with an impatient movement of his hand, and added, "Not you! my daughter Olga!"

"Olga! Go, my child, papa is calling you," cried the general's wife in a soft voice, in French, to the little girl, who was standing undecidedly in the center of the room.

"Can you not drop your foreign phrases?" angrily interrupted the general. "This is not a drawing-room! You might drop it, from a sense of decency."

His voice became shrill, and made the child shudder and begin to cry. She went to him timidly.

The general looked at her with an expression of pain. He drew her toward him with his left hand, raising the right to bless her.

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!" he whispered, making the sign of the cross over her. "God guard you from evil, from every bad influence. . . . Be kind . . . honest . . . most of all, be honest! Never tell lies. God guard you from falsehood, from lying, even more than from sorrow!"

Tears filled the dying man's eyes. Little Olga shuddered from head to foot; she feared her father, and at the same time was so sorry for him. But pity got the upper hand. She clung to him, wetting him with her tears. Her father raised his hand, wishing to make the sign of the cross once more over the little head which lay on his breast, but could not complete the gesture. His hand fell heavily, his face was once more contorted with pain; he turned to those who stood near him, evidently avoiding meeting his wife's eyes, and whispered:

"Take her away. It is enough. Christ be with her!" And for a moment he collected strength to place his hand on the child's head.

The doctor took the little girl by the hand, but her mother moved quickly toward her.

"Kiss him! Kiss papa's hand!" she whispered, "bid him good-by!"

The general's wife sobbed, and covered her face with her handkerchief, with the grand gesture of a stage queen. The sick man did not see this. At the sound of her voice he frowned and closed his eyes tight, evidently trying not to listen. The doctor led the little girl away to another room and gave her to her governess.

When he came back to the sick man, the general, lying on the sofa, still in the same position, and without looking at his wife who stood beside his pillow, said to her:

"I expect my poor daughter Anna, who has suffered so much injustice through you. . . . I have asked her to forgive me. I shall pray her to be a mother to her little sister . . . I have appointed her the child's guardian. She is good and honest . . . she will teach the child no evil. And this will be best for you also. You are provided for. You will find out from the new will. You could not have had any profit from being her guardian. If Anna does not consent to take little Olga to live with her, and to educate her with her own children, as I have asked her, Olga will be sent to a school. You will prefer liberty to your daughter; it will be pleasanter for you. Is it not so?"

Contempt and bitter irony were perceptible in his voice. His wife did not utter a syllable. She remained so quiet that it might have been thought she did not even hear him, but for the convulsive movement of her lips, and of the fingers of her tightly clasped hands.

The doctor once more made a movement to withdraw discreetly, but the general's voice stopped him.

"Edouard Vicentevitch? Is he here?"

"I am here, your excellency," answered the doctor, bending over the sick man. "Would not your excellency prefer to be carried to the bed? It will be more comfortable lying down."

"More comfortable to die?" sharply interrupted the general. "Why do you drivel? You know I detest beds and blankets. Drop it! Here, take this," and he gave him a sheet of crested paper folded in four, which was lying beside him. "Read it, please. Aloud! so that she may know."

He turned his eyes toward his wife. The doctor unwillingly began his unpleasant task. He was a man of fine feeling, and although he had no very high opinion of the general's wife, still she was a woman. And a beautiful woman. He would have preferred that she should learn from someone else how many of the pleasures of life were slipping away from her, in virtue of the new will. But there was nothing for it but to do as he was ordered. It was always hard to oppose Iuri Pavlovitch; now it was quite impossible.

Olga Vseslavovna listened to the reading of the will with complete composure. She sat motionless, leaning back in an armchair, with downcast eyes, and only showing her emotion when her husband was no longer able to stifle a groan. Then she turned toward him her pale, beautiful face, with evident signs of heartfelt sympathy, and was even rising to come to his assistance. The sick man impatiently refused her services, significantly turning his eyes toward the doctor, who was reading his last will and testament, as though he would say: "Listen! Listen! It concerns you."

It did concern her, without a doubt. General Nazimoff's wife learned that, instead of an income of a hundred thousand a year, which she had had a right to expect, she could count only on a sum sufficient to keep her from poverty; what in her opinion was a mere pittance.

The doctor finished reading, coughing to hide his confusion, and slowly folded the document.

"You have heard?" asked the general, in a faint, convulsive voice.

"I have heard, my friend," quietly answered his wife.

"You have nothing to say?"

"What can I say? You have a right to dispose of what belongs to you. . . . But . . . still I . . . ."

"Still you what?" sharply asked her husband.

"Still, I hope, my friend, that this is not your last will. . . ."

General Nazimoff turned, and even made an effort to raise himself on his elbow.

"God willing, you will recover. Perhaps you will decide more than once to make other dispositions of your property," calmly continued his wife.

The sick man fell back on the pillows.

"You are mistaken. Even if I do not die, you will not be able to deceive me again. This is my last will!" he replied convulsively.

And with trembling hand he gave the doctor a bunch of keys.

"There is the dispatch box. Please open it, and put the will in."

The doctor obeyed his wish, without looking at Olga Vseslavovna. She, on her part, did not look at him. Shrugging her shoulders at her husband's last words, she remained motionless, noticing nothing except his sufferings. His sufferings, it seemed, tortured her.

Meanwhile the dying man followed the doctor with anxious eyes, and as soon as the latter closed the large traveling dispatch box he stretched out his hand to him for the keys.

"So long as I am alive, I will keep them!" he murmured, putting the bunch of keys away in his pocket. "And when I am dead, I intrust them to you, Edouard Vicentevitch. Take care of them, as a last service to me!" And he turned his face once more to the wall.

"And now, leave me alone! The pain is less. Perhaps I shall go to sleep. Leave me!"

"My friend! Permit me to remain near you," the general's wife began, bending tenderly over her husband.

"Go!" he cried sharply. "Leave me in peace, I tell you!"

She rose, trembling. The doctor hastily offered her his arm. She left the room, leaning heavily on him, and once more covering her face with her handkerchief, in tragic style.

"Be calm, your excellency!" whispered the doctor sympathetically, only half conscious of what he was saying.

"These rooms have been prepared for you. You also need to rest, after such a long journey."

"Oh, I am not thinking about myself. I am so sorry for him. Poor, poor, senseless creature. How much I have suffered at his hands. He was always so suspicious, so hard to get on with. And whims and fantasies without end. You know, doctor, I have sometimes even thought he was not in full possession of his faculties."

"Hm!" murmured the doctor, coughing in confusion.

"Take this strange change of his will, for instance," the general's wife continued, not waiting for a clearer expression of sympathy. "Take his manner toward me. And for what reason?"

"Yes, it is very sad," murmured the doctor.

"Tell me, doctor, does he expect his son and daughter?"

"Only his daughter, Anna Iurievna. She promised to come, with her oldest children. A telegram came yesterday. We have been expecting her all day."

"What is the cause of this sudden tenderness? They have not seen each other for ten years. Does he expect her husband, too? His son-in-law, the pedagogue?" contemptuously asked the general's wife.

"No! How could he come? He could not leave his service. And his son, too, Peter Iurevitch, he cannot come at once. He is on duty, in Transcaspia. It is a long way."

"Yes, it is a long way!" assented the general's wife, evidently busy with other thoughts. "But tell me, Edouard Vicentevitch, this new will, has it been written long?"

"It was drawn up only to-day. The draft was prepared last week, but the general kept putting it off. But when his pains began this morning. . . ."

"Is it the end? Is it dangerous?" interrupted Olga Vseslavovna.

"Very—a very bad sign. When they began, Iuri Pavlovitch sent at once for the lawyer. He was still here when you arrived."

"Yes. And the old will, which he made before, has been destroyed?"

"I do not know for certain. But I think not. Oh, no, I forgot. The general was going to send a telegram."

"Yes? to send a telegram?"

The general's wife shrugged her shoulders, sadly shook her head, and added:

"He is so changeable! so changeable! But I think it is all the same. According to law, only the last will is valid?"

"Yes, without doubt; the last."

The general's wife bowed her head.

"What hurts me most," she whispered, with a bitter smile, bending close to the young doctor, and leaning heavily on his arm, "what hurts me most, is not the money. I am not avaricious. But why should he take my child away from me? Why should he pass over her own mother, and intrust her to her half-sister? A woman whom I do not know, who has not distinguished herself by any services or good actions, so far as I know. I shall not submit. I shall contest the will. The law must support the right of the mother. What do you think, doctor?"

The doctor hastily assented, though, to tell the truth, he was not thinking of anything at the moment, except the strange manner in which the general's wife, while talking, pressed close to her companion.

At that moment a bell rang, and the general's loud voice was heard:

"Doctor! Edouard Vicentevitch!"

"Coming!" answered the doctor.

And leaving Olga Vseslavovna at the threshold of her room, he ran quickly to the sick man.

"A vigorous voice—for a dying man! He shouts as he used to at the manœuvers!" thought the general's wife.

And her handsome face at once grew dark with the hate which stole over it. This was only a passing expression, however; it rapidly gave place to sorrow, when she saw the manservant coming from the sick man.

"What is the matter with your master, Yakov? Is he worse?"

"No, madam. God has been gracious. He told me to push the box nearer him, and ordered Edouard Vicentevitch to open it. He wants to send some telegram or other."

"Thank God, he is not worse. Yakov, I am going to send a telegram to the station myself, in a few minutes, by my coachman. You can give him the general's telegram, too."

"Very well, madam."

"And another thing. I shall not go to bed. If there is any change in your master's condition, Yakov, come and knock at my door at once. I beg of you, tell me the very moment anything happens. Here is something for you, Yakov;—you have grown thin, waiting upon your master!"

"I thank you most humbly, your excellency. We must not grudge our exertions," the man answered, putting a note of considerable value in his pocket.

III

CONTRARY to expectation, the night passed quietly enough. Emotion and weariness claimed their own; Olga Vseslavovna, in spite of all her efforts, fell into a sleep toward morning; and when she awoke, she started in dismay, noticing that the sun had already climbed high in the sky, and was pouring into her room.

Her maid, a deft Viennese, who had remained with this accommodating mistress for five years, quieted her by telling her that the master was better, that he was still asleep, not having slept for the greater part of the night.

"The doctor and Yakov were busy with him most of the night," she explained. "They were sorting all sorts of papers; some of them they tied up, writing something on them; others they tore up, or threw into the fire. The grate is full of ashes. Yakov told me."

"And there were no more telegrams?"

"No, madam, there were no more. Yakov and our Friedrich would have let me know at once; I was there in the anteroom; they both kept coming through on errands.

But there were no more telegrams, except the two that were sent last night."

Olga Vseslavovna dressed, breakfasted, and went to her husband. But at the threshold of his room she was stopped by the direction of the sick man to admit no one without special permission except the doctor, or his eldest daughter, if she should come.

"Tell Edouard Vicentevitch to come out to me," ordered the general's wife. The doctor was called, and in great confusion confirmed the general's orders.

"But perhaps he did not think that such an order could apply to me?" she said, astonished.

The doctor apologized, but had to admit that it was she who was intended, and that his excellency had sent word to her excellency that she should not give herself the trouble of visiting him.

"He is out of his mind," declared the general's wife quietly, but with conviction, shrugging her shoulders. "Why should he hate me so—for all my love to him, an old man, who might have been my father?"

And Olga Vseslavovna once more took refuge in her pocket handkerchief, this time, instead of tears, giving vent to sobs of vexation.

The doctor, always shy in the presence of women, stood with hanging head and downcast eyes, as though he were to blame.

"What is it they are saying about you burning papers all night?" Olga Vseslavovna asked, in a weak voice.

"Oh, not nearly all night. Iuri Pavlovitch remembered that he ought to destroy some old letters and papers. There were some to be put in order. There, in the box, there is a packet addressed to your excellency. I was told to write the address."

"Indeed! Could I not see it?"

"Oh no, on no account. They are all locked up in the box along with the last will. And the general has the keys."

A bitter smile of humiliation played about the young woman's lips.

"So the new will has not been burned yet?" she asked.

And to the startled negative of the doctor, who repeated that "it was lying on the top of the papers in the box," she added:

"Well, it will be burned yet. Do not fear. Especially if God in His mercy prolongs my husband's life. You see, he has always had a mysterious passion for writing new documents, powers of attorney, deeds of gift, wills, whatever comes into his mind. He writes new ones, and burns the old ones. But what can you do? We must submit to each new fancy. We cannot contradict a sick man."

Olga Vseslavovna went back to her room. She only left her bedroom for a few minutes that day, to hear the final word of the lights of the medical profession, who had come together for a general consultation in the afternoon; all the rest of the day she shut herself up. The conclusions of the physicians, though they differed completely in detail, were similar in the main, and far from comforting; the life and continued suffering of the sick man could not last more than a few days.

In the evening a telegram came from Anna Iurievna; she informed her father that she would be with him on the following day, at five in the afternoon.

"Shall I be able to hold out? Shall I last so long?" sighed the sick man, all day long. And the more he was disturbed in mind, the more threatening were his attacks of pain. He passed a bad night. Toward morning a violent attack, much worse than any that had gone before, almost carried him away. He could hardly breathe, owing to the sharp suffering. Hot baths for his hands and steam inhalations no longer had any beneficial effect, though they had alleviated his pain hitherto.

The doctor, the Sister of Mercy, and the servant wore themselves out. But still, as before, his wife alone was not admitted to him. She raged with anger, trying, and not without success, to convince everyone that she was going mad with despair. Little Olga had been taken away on the previous day by a friend of the general's, to stay there "during this terrible time." That night Madame Nazimoff did not go to bed at all; and, as befitted a devoted wife, did not quit her husband's door. When the violent attack just before dawn quieted down, she made an attempt to go in to him; but no sooner did the sick man see her at the head of his couch, on which he had at last been persuaded to lie, than strong displeasure was expressed in his face, and, no longer able to speak, he made an angry motion of his hand toward her, and groaned heavily. The Sister of Mercy with great firmness asked the general's wife not to trouble the sick man with her presence.

"And I am to put up with this. I am to submit to all this?" thought Olga Vseslavovna, writhing with wrath. "To endure all this from him, and after his death to suffer beggary? No, a thousand times no! Better death than penury and such insults." And she fell into gloomy thought.

That gesture of displeasure at the sight of his wife was the last conscious act of Iuri Pavlovitch Nazimoff. At eight in the morning he lost consciousness, in the midst of violent suffering, which lasted until the end. By the early afternoon he was no more.

During the last hour of his agony his wife knelt beside his couch without let or hindrance, and wept inconsolably. The formidable aristocrat and millionaire was dead.

Everything went on along the usual lines. The customary stir and unceremonious bustle, instead of cautious whispering, rose around the dead body, in preparation for a fashionable funeral. No near relatives were present except his wife, and she was confined to her room, half-fainting, half-hysterical. All responsibility fell on the humble doctor, and he busied himself indefatigably, conscientiously, in the sweat of his brow, making every effort to omit nothing. But, as always happens, he omitted the most important thing of all. The early twilight was already descending on St. Petersburg, shrouded in chilly mist, when Edouard Vicentevitch Polesski struck his brow in despair; he had suddenly remembered the keys and the box, committed to his care by the dying man. At that moment, the body, dressed in full uniform, with all his regalia, was lying in the great, darkened room on a table, covered with brocade, awaiting the coffin and the customary wreaths. The doctor rushed into the empty bedroom. Everything in it was already in order; the bed stood there, without mattress or pillows. There was nothing on the dressing table, either.

Where were the keys? Where was the box? The box was standing as before, untouched, locked. His heart at once felt lighter. But the keys? No doubt the police would come in a few minutes. It was astonishing that they had not come already. They would seal everything. Everything must be in order. Where was Yakov? Probably he had taken them. Or . . . the general's wife?

Polesski rushed to look for the manservant, but could not find him. There was so much to do; he had gone to buy something, to order something. "Oh Lord! And the announcement?" he suddenly remembered. It must be written at once, and sent to the newspapers. He must ask the general's wife, however, what words he should use. However much he might wish to avoid her, still she was now the most important person. And he could ask at the same time whether she had seen the keys.

The doctor went to the rooms of the general's wife. She was lying down, suffering severely, but she came out to him. "What words was he to use? It was all the same to her. 'With deep regret,' 'with heartfelt sorrow,' what did she care? The keys? What keys? No! she had not seen any keys, and did not know where they were. But why should he be disturbed about them? The servants were trustworthy; nothing would go astray."

"Yes, but we must have them ready for the police. They will come in a few minutes, to seal up the dead man's papers!"

"To seal up the papers? Why?"

"That is the law. So that everything should be intact, until after the last will and testament of the deceased has been read, according to his wishes."

General Nazimoff's wife paled perceptibly. She knew nothing of such an obstacle, and had not expected it. The doctor was too busy to notice her pallor.

"Very well; I shall write the announcement at once, and send it to the newspapers. I suppose 'Novoe Vremya' and 'Novosti' will be enough?"

"Do as you think best. Write it here, in my room. Here is everything you require; pens, paper. Write, and then read it to me. I shall be back in a moment. I want to put a bandage round my head. It aches so. Wait for me here." And the general's wife went from the sitting-room to her bedroom.

"Rita!" she whispered to her faithful maid, who was hurriedly sewing a mourning gown of crape for her. "Do not let the doctor go till I return. Do you understand? Do what you please, but do not let him go." The general's wife slipped from the bedroom into the passage through a small side door, and disappeared.

The two rooms between hers and the chamber where the dead man lay were quite empty and nearly dark; there were no candles in them. From the chamber came the feeble glimmer of the tiny lamps burning before the icons.* The tapers were not lit yet, as the deacon had not yet arrived. He was to come at the same time as the priest and the coffin. For the moment there was no one near the dead man; in the anteroom sat the Sister of Mercy.

"You wish to pray?" she asked the general's wife.

"Yes, I shall pray there, in his room."

She slipped past the dead body without looking at it, to the room that had been the general's bedroom, and closed the door behind her. She was afraid to lock it, and after all, was it necessary? It would only take a moment. There it is, the box! She knows it of old! And she knows its key of old, too; it is not so long since her husband had no secrets from her.

The key was quickly slipped into the lock, and the lid rose quickly. The paper? That new, detestable paper, which might deprive her of everything. Ah! there it is!

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* Sacred images.

To close the lid quickly, and turn the key in the lock; to hide the keys somewhere; here, between the seat and the back of the sofa, on which he lay. That's it!

A sigh of relief from fear escaped the beautiful lips of the handsome woman, lips which were pale through those terrible days. She could feel secure at last!

She must look at the document, the proof of his cruelty, his injustice, his stupidity! She must make sure that there was no mistake! Olga Vseslavovna went up to the window, and taking advantage of the last ray of the gray day, unfolded the will.

" In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! " she read. Yes, that is it, the will.

" How he pronounced those same words, when he was blessing little Olga," she remembered. " Blessing her! And his hand did not tremble, when he signed this. To deprive her, to deprive them both, of everything, all on account of those hated people? But now—it should never be! On no account! Your down-at-the-heel pedagogue shall not strut about in peacock's feathers! Olga and I . . . require the money more! "

And the general's wife was tempted to snap her fingers in triumph in the direction of the dead man.

Suddenly, quite close to the door, the sound of steps was heard. Good heavens! And she held the big sheet of crested paper in her hand! Where could she put it? She had no time to think of folding it up. There! they are coming in already! Who can it be?

And the will lay on the floor, the general's wife kneeling on it, as on a prayer carpet, in an attitude of prayer, her clasped hands on the window sill, her wet eyes fixed on a faintly twinkling star, as though calling heaven to witness her inconsolable grief and bereavement.

It was only the Sister of Mercy.

" Madam, the people have come, bringing the coffin; and I think the police have also come."

"Yes, in a moment. Tell them I am coming immediately."

The Sister of Mercy went out.

"See how she loved her husband. And why was he so unjust to her at the last?" she involuntarily reproached the dead general.

Meanwhile the general's wife had risen hastily, folded the will as best she could, in four, in eight folds, and crushing it together in her hand, went quietly from the room, which now filled her with dread.

She was so confused that she did not even think of looking for her pocket; she simply held her packet tight, and let her hand hang down, hiding it in the folds of her wide dressing-gown. There seemed to be so many people in the room which a moment before was empty, that she felt cowed. Her heart beat pitilessly, and the blood throbbed so violently in her temples that she could not understand what was said to her. They were asking her if they might place the body in the coffin, which had already been placed beside it. Her silence was taken as consent. The skilful undertakers easily lifted the already rigid body.

Olga Vseslavovna stood at the head of the dead general. Among the crowd of undertakers and servants, she suddenly saw coming toward her, with outstretched hand, and with tears of compassion in her eyes, the Princess Ryadski, the same aristocratic kinswoman who had already taken little Olga to stay with her.

"I must shake hands with her! And that horrible packet is in my hand! Where shall I put it? How can I hide it?" Before her eyes gleamed the brilliantly lighted, ashen forehead of the dead man, helplessly bent backward and sideways, as the whole body was suspended in the hands of the undertakers, over its last abode.

A saving thought!

The general's wife bent gently over the dead body. She gently supported the head of the corpse, gently laid it on the satin cushion, straightened the frills which surrounded the hard pillow, and, unperceived, left under it the twisted roll of paper.

"It will be safer there!" The thought flashed through her mind. "He wanted to keep his will himself; well, keep it to eternity, now! What more can you ask?"

And it even seemed ludicrous to her. She could hardly restrain a smile of triumph, changing it into a sad smile of grief, in reply to her kinswoman's condolences. The coffin was already lying in state on the bier; it was covered with brocade and flowers. The princess, as kinswoman of the late general, bent low, and first laid on the dead body the wreath she had brought with her.

"The poor sufferer has entered into rest," she whispered, shaking her head. "Will the funeral service be soon? Where will it be? Where is Olga Vseslavovna?"

"She will be here in a moment," the Sister of Mercy whispered, deeply affected; "she has gone to fix herself. They will begin the funeral service in a few minutes, and she is all in disorder. She is in great grief. Will you not take a seat?"

"What? Sit down? Thank you," loftily replied the princess. And she went toward a dignified personage who was entering, adorned with many orders and an aristocratic beard.

The general's wife soon came to herself. "Rita! I must wash and dress as quickly as possible. Ah! pray forgive me, doctor! They called me away to my husband. They were placing him in the coffin." She sighed deeply. "What is this? Oh, yes, the announcement of his death. Very good. Send it, please. But I must dress at once. The funeral service will begin immediately."

"Doctor! Is the doctor here?" an anxious voice sounded in the corridor.

"I am coming! What is it?"

"Please come quick, Edouard Vicentevitch!" Yakov called him. "The lady is very ill downstairs; Anna Iurievna, the general's daughter! I was out to order the flowers; I come back, and see the lady lying in a faint in the entrance. She had just arrived, and asked; and they answered her that he was dead, without the slightest preparation! And she could not bear it, and fainted."

Yakov said all this as they went.

"Actress!" angrily thought Olga Vseslavovna. And immediately she added mentally, "Well, she may stand on her head now, it is all the same to me!"

IV

WHETHER it was all the same to her or not, the deep despair of the daughter, who had not been in time to bid her father farewell, had not been in time to receive his blessing, after many years of anger, which had borne heavily on the head of the blameless young woman, was so evidently sincere, and produced such a deep impression on everyone, that her stepmother also was moved.

Anna Iurievna resembled her father, as much as a young, graceful, pretty woman can resemble an elderly man with strongly-marked features and athletic frame, such as was General Nazimoff. But in spite of the delicacy of her form, and the gentleness of her eyes, her glance sometimes flashed fire in a manner very like the flashing eyes of her father, and in her strong will, firm character, and inflexible adherence to what she believed to be necessary and right, Anna was exactly like her father.

For nearly ten years his daughter had obediently borne his anger; from the day of her marriage to the man she loved, whom evil-minded people had succeeded in calumniating in the general's mind. Though writing incessantly to him, begging him to pardon her, to understand that he had made a mistake, that her husband was a man of honor, and that she would be fully and perfectly happy, but for the burden of her father's wrath, and of the separation from him, she had never until the last few weeks received a reply from him. But quite recently something mysterious had happened. Not only had her father written to her that he wished to see her and her children in St. Petersburg, whither he was just setting out, but a few days later he had written again, a long, tender letter, in which he had asked her forgiveness. Without giving any explanations, he said that he had received indubitable proofs of the innocence and chivalrous honor of her husband; that he felt himself deeply guilty toward him, and was miserable on account of the injustice he had committed. In the following letters, praying his daughter to hasten her coming, because he was dangerously ill, and the doctors thought could not last long, he filled her with astonishment by expressing his intention to make a new will, and his determination to separate his youngest daughter "from such a mother," and by his prayers to her and her husband not to refuse to take upon themselves little Olga's education.

"What had happened? How could that light-minded woman have so deeply wounded my father?" Anna asked in bewilderment.

"If she was merely light-minded!" her husband answered, shrugging his shoulders. "But she is so malicious, so crafty, and so daring that anything may be expected from her."

"But in that case there would be an open scandal. We would know something for certain. Nowadays they even relate such stories in the newspapers, and my father is so well known, so noteworthy!"

"That is just why they don't write about him!" answered Borisoff, her husband, smiling. He himself flatly refused to go to St. Petersburg. With horror he remembered the first year of his marriage, before he had succeeded in obtaining a transfer to another city, and was compelled to meet the woman he detested; compelled also to meet his father-in-law, a wise and honorable old man, who had fallen so completely into the toils of this crafty woman. Anna Iurievna knew that her husband despised her stepmother; that he detested her as the cause of all the grief which they had had to endure through her, and most of all, on account of the injustice she was guilty of toward her brother, the general's son.

For six years Borisoff had lived with young Peter Nazimoff, as his tutor and teacher, and loved him sincerely. The boy had already reached the highest class at school, when his sister, two years older than he, finished her schooling, and returned to her father's house, about the time of the general's second marriage. What the young tutor tried not to notice and to endure, for love of his pupil, in the first year of the general's second marriage, became intolerable when the general's daughter returned home, and to all the burden of his difficult position was added the knowledge of their mutual love. He proceeded frankly, and the whole matter was soon settled. But the young man had never uttered a syllable as to the cause of Madame Nazimoff's hatred for him. For the sake of his father-in-law's peace of mind, he sincerely hoped that he would never know. Anna was convinced that the whole cause of her stepmother's hostility was her prejudice against what was in her opinion a *mésalliance*. In part she was right, but the chief reason of this hostility remained forever a secret to her. Unfortunately, it was not equally a secret to her father.

Of late years he had gradually been losing faith in his second wife's character. It went so far that the general felt much more at ease when she was away. Before the last illness of Iuri Pavlovitch, which, to tell the truth, was almost his first, Olga Vseslavovna had gone abroad with her daughter, intending to travel for a year; but she had hardly been gone two months when the general unexpectedly determined to go to St. Petersburg to seek a divorce, to see his elder daughter, and change his will. Perhaps he would never have determined on such decisive measures had not something wholly unexpected taken place.

Borisoff was quite mistaken in thinking that he had so carefully destroyed all the letters which the general's young wife had written to him, before his marriage to Anna, that no material evidence of Olga Vseslavovna's early design of treachery remained. Even before she married the general, she had had a confidential servant, who carried out many commissions for the beautiful young woman, whose fame had gone abroad through the three districts along the Volga, the arena of her early triumphs. Later, the young lady found a new favorite in foreign lands—the same Rita who was still with her. Martha, the Russian confidential servant, heartily detested the German girl, and such strife arose between them that not only the general's wife, but even the general himself, was deprived of peace and tranquillity. Martha was no fool; Olga Vseslavovna had to be careful with her; she did take care, but she herself did not know to what an extent she was in the woman's power. Foreseeing a black day of ingratitude, Martha, with wonderful forethought, had put on one side one or two letters from each series of her mistress' secret correspondence, which always passed through her hands. Perhaps she would not have made such a bad use of them but for her mistress' last, intolerable insult. Prizing in her servants, next to swift obedience, a knowledge of languages, her mistress did not make use of her when traveling abroad; but hitherto she had taken both servants with her. But on her last journey she was so heartily tired of Martha, and her perpetual tears and quarrels, that she determined to get on without her, the more so that her daughter's governess was also traveling with her. Her company was growing too numerous.

There was no limit to Martha's wrath when she learned that she was going to be left behind. Her effrontery was so great that she advised her mistress "for her own sake" not to put such an affront upon her, since she would not submit to it without seeking revenge. But her mistress never dreamed of what Martha was planning, and what a risk she ran.

Hardly had the general's wife departed when Martha asked the general to let her leave, saying she would find work elsewhere. The general saw no way of keeping her; and he did not even wish to do so, thinking her only a quarrelsome, ill-tempered woman. The confidential servant left the house, and even the city. And immediately her revenge and torture of the general began, cutting straight at the root of his happiness, his health, even his life. He began to receive, almost daily, letters from different parts of Russia, for Martha had plenty of friends and chums. With measureless cruelty Martha began by sending the less important documents, still signed with her mistress' maiden name; then two or three letters from the series of the most recent times, and finally there came a whole packet of those sent by the general's wife to the tutor, in the first year of her marriage with the general, before Borisoff had met Anna.

The crafty Martha, knowing perfectly the whole state of affairs to which these letters referred, often copied out their contents, and kept the letters themselves concealed, saying to herself, "God knows what may turn up, some day!

"If they are no use, I can burn them. But they may be useful. It is always a good thing to keep our masters in our power," argued the sagacious woman, and she was not mistaken in her calculations, although these letters served not for her profit, but only for a sanguinary revenge.

These notes and letters, which finally opened his eyes to the true character of his wife, and his own crying injustice to his elder children, were now lying in the general's dispatch box, in a neatly tied packet, directed in the doctor's handwriting to "Her Excellency Olga Vseslavovna Nazimoff."

As soon as she received her father's first letter Anna began to get ready to go to St. Petersburg, but unfortunately she was kept back by the sickness, first of one child, then of another. But for his last telegrams, she would not have started even now, because she did not realize the dangerous character of his illness. But now, finding that she had come too late, the unhappy woman could not forgive herself.

Everyone was grieved to see her bitter sorrow, after the funeral service for her father. Princess Ryadski burst into tears, as she looked at her; and all the acquaintances and relations of the general were far more disturbed by her despair than by the general's death. Olga Vseslavovna was secretly scandalized at such lack of self-control, but outwardly she seemed greatly touched and troubled by the situation of her poor stepdaughter. But she did not venture to express her sympathy too openly in the presence of others, remembering the words of "the crazy creature" when she had come to herself after her fainting fit, and her stepmother had hurried up to embrace her.

"Leave me!" Anna had cried, when she saw her. "I cannot bear to see you! You killed my father!"

It was well that there were only servants in the anteroom. But the general's wife did not wish to risk another such scene, now that so many people were present. And besides she was extremely disturbed; the friends who had come to the funeral service had brought flowers; and the half-crazy princess, with the aid of two other ladies, had taken a fancy to decorate the coffin, and especially the head, with them. It is impossible to describe what Olga Vseslavovna suffered, as she watched all those hands moving about among the folds of the muslin, the frills, the covering, almost under the satin cushion even; a little more and she would have fainted in earnest.

She had always boasted that she had strong nerves, and this was quite true; nevertheless, during these days, their strength was evidently giving way, as she could not get to sleep for a long time that night, and heaven only knows what fancies passed through her mind. It was almost morning before Olga Vseslavovna got to sleep, and even then it was not for long.

She dreamed that she was descending endless stairs and dark corridors, with a heavy, shapeless burden on her shoulders. A bright, constantly-changing flame flickered before her; now red, now yellow, now green, it flitted before her from side to side. She knew that if she could reach it, the burden would fall from her. But the light seemed to be taunting her, now appearing, now disappearing, and suddenly going out altogether. And she found herself in the darkness, in a damp cellar, seemingly empty, but filled with something's invisible presence. What was it? She did not know. But this pervading something frightened her terribly, smothered her, pressing on her from all sides, depriving her of air. She was choking! Terror seized her at the thought that it . . . was Death! Must she die? Was it possible? But that brightly shining light had just promised her life, gayety, brilliance! She must hurry to overtake it. And she tried to run. But her feet would not obey her; she could not move.

"Heaven! Heaven!" she cried, "but what is it? Whence has such a disaster come? What is holding me? Let me go, or I shall be smothered in this stench, under this intolerable burden!"

Suddenly Iuri Pavlovitch walked past her. She immediately recognized him, and joyfully caught at his cloak. "Iuri! Forgive me! Help me!" she cried.

Her husband stopped, looked sadly at her, and answered: "I would gladly help you, but you yourself hinder me. Let me go; I must fulfill your directions."

At that moment she awoke. She was bathed in a cold perspiration, and clutched wildly at the coverlet with both hands. There was no one near her, but she clearly felt someone's presence, and was convinced that she had really seen her husband a moment before. In her ears resounded his words: "I must fulfill your directions!" Directions? What directions?

She sprang up, and began to feel about over the carpet with her bare feet, looking for her slippers. A terrible thought had come into her mind. She felt that she must settle it at once. She must take the will, take it away from there! burn it! destroy it! She feverishly drew on her dressing gown, and threw a shawl over her shoulders.

"Rita! Get up quick! Quick! Come!"

The frightened maid rose, still half asleep, and rubbed her eyes, understanding nothing. Her mistress' ice-cold hands clutched her, and dragged her somewhere.

"Ach lieber Gott . . . Gott in Himmel!" she muttered. "What has happened? What do you want?"

"Hush! Come quick!" And Olga Vseslavovna, with a candle in her trembling hand, went forward, dragging the trembling Rita with her. She opened the door of her bedroom, and went out. All the doors were open *en suite*, and straight in front of her, in the center of the fourth, shone the coffin of her husband, covered with cloth of gold and lit up by the tall tapers standing round the bier.

"What does it mean?" whispered the general's wife. "Why have they opened all the doors?"

"I do not know . . . they were all closed last night," murmured the maid in reply, her teeth chattering with fear. She longed to ask her mistress whither they were going, and what for? She wanted to stop, and not enter the funeral chamber; but she was afraid to speak.

They passed quickly through the rooms; at the door of the last the general's wife set her candle down on a chair, and halted for a moment. The loud snoring of the reader startled them both.

"It is the deacon!" whispered the general's wife reassuringly. Rita had hardly strength to nod assent. All the same, the healthy snoring of a living man comforted her. Without moving from where she stood, the maid tremblingly drew her woolen shawl closer about her, trying to see the sofa on which the deacon lay.

Knitting her brows, and biting her lips till they were sore, Olga Vseslavovna went forward determinedly to the bier. She thrust both hands under the flowers on the pillow. The frill was untouched. The satin of the cushion was there, but where was . . . ? Her heart, that had been beating like a hammer, suddenly stopped and stood still. There was not a trace of the will!

"Perhaps I have forgotten. Perhaps it was on the other side," thought Olga Vseslavovna, and went round to the left side of the coffin.

No! It was not there, either! Where was it? Who could have taken it? Suddenly her heart failed her utterly, and she clutched at the edge of the coffin to keep herself from falling. It seemed to her that under the stiff, pallid, rigidly clasped hands of the dead general something gleamed white through the transparent muslin of the covering, something like a piece of paper.

"Nonsense! Self-suggestion! It is impossible! Hallucination!" The thought flashed through her tortured brain. She forced herself to be calm, and to look again.

Yes! She had not been mistaken. The white corner of a folded paper appeared clearly against the general's dark uniform. At the same moment a cold draught coming from somewhere set the tapers flickering. Shadows danced around the room, over the bier, across the dead man's face; and in the quick change of light and shadow it seemed to her that the rigid features became more living, that a mournful smile formed itself on the closed lips, that the tightly-shut eyelids quivered. A wild cry rang through the whole room. With a desperate shriek: "His eyes! He is looking at me!" the general's wife staggered forward and fell fainting to the floor, beside her husband's bier.

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The deacon sprang from his sofa with a cry, and an answering cry came from the lips of the shivering Rita, as she fled from the room. Servants rushed in, rubbing their eyes, still half-asleep, questioning each other, running this way and that. The deacon, spurred by a feeling of guilt, was determined to conceal the fact that he was sleeping. "It was the lady!" he said. "She came in to pray; she told me to stop reading while she prayed. She knelt down. Then she prayed for a long time, and suddenly . . . . suddenly she cried out, and fainted. Grief, brothers! It is terrible! To lose such a husband!" and he set them to work with restoratives, himself rubbing the fallen woman's chilly hands.

The general's wife opened her eyes after a few minutes.

Looking wildly round in bewilderment, she seemed to be wondering where she was and how she had come there. Suddenly she remembered.

"The will! In his hands! Take it!" she cried, and fainted again. By this time the whole household was awake. Anna Iurievna had come in, full of astonishment at the sudden disturbance, but with the same feeling of deep quiet and peace still filling her heart and giving her features an expression of joy and calm. She heard the cry of the general's wife, and the words were recorded in her mind, though she did not at first give them any meaning.

She set herself, with all the tenderness of a good woman, to minister to the other's need, sending her own maid for sal volatile, chafing the fainting woman's hands, and giving orders that a bed should be prepared for her in another room, further away from the bier. As she spoke, quietly, gravely, with authority, the turmoil gradually subsided. The frightened servants recovered themselves, and moved about with the orderly obedience they ordinarily showed; and the deacon, above all anxious to cover his negligence, began intoning the liturgy, lending an atmosphere of solemnity to the whole room.

The servants, returning to announce that the bedroom was ready, were ordered by Anna Iurievna to lift the fainting woman with all care and gentleness, and she herself went with them to see the general's wife safely bestowed in her room, and waited while the doctor did all in his power to make her more comfortable. Olga Vseslavovna did not at once recover consciousness. She seemed to pass from a faint into an uneasy slumber, which, however, gradually became more quiet.

Only then, as she was leaving the room, did Anna Iurievna bethink her of the strange words that had fallen on her ears: "The will! In his hands! Take it!" And repeating them questioningly to herself, she walked slowly back toward the room in which lay her father's body.

But she was even more occupied with her own thoughts. She no longer felt in her heart the bitter resentment toward

Olga Vseslavovna that had filled it yesterday. She was conscious of a feeling of sorrow for the helpless woman, of compassion for her empty, shallow life, the fruit of an empty, shallow heart. And she was wondering why such empty, joyless lives should exist in a world where there was such deep happiness and joy.

She came over to her father's coffin, close to which the deacon was still droning out his liturgy, and stood beside the dead body, looking down at the strong, quiet face, and vividly recalling her dream of the night before. Her eyes rested on the many stars and medals on his breast, and on his hands, quietly clasped in death. Then suddenly, and quite mechanically, Olga Vseslavovna's cry, as she returned to consciousness, came back into her mind:

"The will! In his hands! Take it!" And bending down, she noted for the first time something white beneath the muslin canopy. As she scrutinized it wonderingly, she was conscious of an humble, apologetic voice murmuring something at her elbow:

"Forgive me, Anna Iurievna. I humbly beg you, forgive me! It was I . . . in the night . . . the flowers fell . . . I was putting them back . . . fixing the head of your sainted papa. . . . It was under his head, the paper . . . I thought he wanted to keep it. . . . I put it in his hands, to be safe! . . . Forgive me, Anna Iurievna, if I have done any harm."

It was the deacon, still oppressed by a feeling of guilt. Anna Iurievna turned to him, and then turned back again, to her father's body, to the white object shining under the muslin canopy. And once more Olga Vseslavovna's words came into her mind:

"The will! In his hands! Take it!"

Gently raising the canopy, she softly drew the paper from beneath the general's clasped hands, and unfolded it. She read no more than the opening words, but she had read enough to realize that it was, indeed, her father's will.

Feodor Mikhailovitch Dostoyevsky

Crime and Punishment[1]

ONE sultry evening early in July a young man emerged from the small furnished lodging he occupied in a large five-storied house in the Pereoulok S——, and turned slowly, with an air of indecision, toward the K—— bridge. He was fortunate enough not to meet his landlady on the stairs. She occupied the floor beneath him, and her kitchen, with its usually open door, was entered from the staircase. Thus, whenever the young man went out, he found himself obliged to pass under the enemy's fire, which always produced a morbid terror, humiliating him and making him knit his brows. He owed her some money and felt afraid of encountering her.

It was not that he had been terrified or crushed by misfortune, but that for some time past he had fallen into a state of nervous depression akin to hypochondria. He had withdrawn from society and shut himself up, till he was ready to shun, not merely his landlady, but every human face. Poverty had once weighed him down, though, of late, he had lost his sensitiveness on that score. He had given up all his daily occupations. In his heart of hearts he laughed scornfully at his landlady and the extremities to which she might proceed. Still, to be waylaid on the stairs, to have to listen to all her jargon, hear her demands, threats, and complaints, and have to make excuses and subterfuges in return—no, he preferred to steal down without attracting notice. On this occasion, however, when he had gained the street, he felt surprised himself at this dread of meeting the woman to whom he was in debt.

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[1] (At the risk of shocking the reader, it has been decided that the real permanent detective stories of the world were ill represented without Dostoyevsky's terrible tale of what might be called "self-detection." If to sensitive readers the story seems so real as to be hideous, it is well to recall that Dostoyevsky in 1849 underwent the agony of sentence to death as a revolutionist. Although the sentence was commuted to hard labor in Siberia, and although six years later he was freed and again took up his writing, his mind never rose from beneath the weight of horror and hopelessness that hangs over offenders against the Great White Czar. Dostoyevsky, sentenced as a criminal, herded with criminals, really *became* a criminal in literary imagination. Add to this a minute observation, a marvelous memory, ardent political convictions—and we can understand why the story here, with others of his, is taken as a scientific text by criminologists.—EDITOR.)

"Why should I be alarmed by these trifles when I am contemplating such a desperate deed?" thought he, and he gave a strange smile. "Ah, well, man holds the remedy in his own hands, and lets everything go its own way, simply through cowardice—that is an axiom. I should like to know what people fear most:—whatever is contrary to their usual habits, I imagine. But I am talking too much. I talk and so I do nothing, though I might just as well say, I do nothing and so I talk. I have acquired this habit of chattering during the last month, while I have been lying for days together in a corner, feeding my mind on trifles. Come, why am I taking this walk now? Am I capable of *that?* Can *that* really be serious? Not in the least. These are mere chimeras, idle fancies that flit across my brain!"

The heat in the streets was stifling. The crowd, the sight of lime, bricks, scaffolding, and the peculiar odor so familiar to the nostrils of the inhabitant of St. Petersburg who has no means of escaping to the country for the summer, all contributed to irritate the young man's already excited nerves. The reeking fumes of the dram shops, so numerous in this part of the city, and the tipsy men to be seen at every point, although it was no holiday, completed the repulsive character of the scene. Our hero's refined features betrayed, for a moment, an expression of bitter disgust. We may observe casually that he was not destitute of personal attractions; he was above middle height, with a slender and well-proportioned figure, and he had dark auburn hair and fine dark eyes. In a little while he sank into a deep reverie, or rather into a sort of mental torpor. He walked on without noticing, or trying to notice, his surroundings. Occasionally he muttered a few words to himself; as if, as he himself had just perceived, this had become his habit. At this moment it dawned upon him that his ideas were becoming confused and that he was very feeble; he had eaten nothing worth mentioning for the last two days.

His dress was so miserable that anyone else might have scrupled to go out in such rags during the daytime. This quarter of the city, indeed, was not particular as to dress. In the neighborhood of the Cyennaza or Haymarket, in those streets in the heart of St. Petersburg, occupied by the artisan classes, no vagaries in costume call forth the least surprise. Besides the young man's fierce disdain had reached such a pitch, that, notwithstanding his extreme sensitiveness, he felt no shame at exhibiting his tattered garments in the street. He would have felt differently had he come across anyone he knew, any of the old friends whom he usually avoided. Yet he stopped short on hearing the attention of passers-by directed to him by the thick voice of a tipsy man shouting: "Eh, look at the German hatter!" The exclamation came from an individual who, for some unknown reason, was being jolted away in a great wagon. The young man snatched off his hat and began to examine it. It was a high-crowned hat that had been originally bought at Zimmermann's, but had become worn and rusty, was covered with dents and stains, slit and short of a brim, a frightful object in short. Yet its owner, far from feeling his vanity wounded, was suffering rather from anxiety than humiliation.

"I suspected this," muttered he, uneasily, "I foresaw it. That's the worst of it! Some wretched trifle like this might spoil it all. Yes, this hat is certainly too remarkable; it looks so ridiculous. I must get a cap to suit my rags; any old thing would be better than this horror. Hats like these are not worn; this one would be noticeable a *verst*[1] off; it would be remembered; people would think of it again some time after, and it might furnish a clew. I must attract as little attention as possible just now. Trifles become important, everything hinges on them."

He had not far to go; he knew the exact distance between his lodging and present destination—just seven hundred and thirty paces. He had counted them when his plan only floated through his brain like a vague dream. At that time, he himself would not have believed it capable of realization; he merely dallied in fancy with a chimera which was both terrible and seductive. But a month had elapsed, and he had already begun to view it in a different light. Although he reproached himself throughout his soliloquies with irresolution and a want of energy, he had accustomed himself, little by little, and, indeed, in spite of himself, to consider the realization of his dream a possibility, though he doubted his own resolution. He was but just now rehearsing his enterprise, and his agitation was increasing at every step.

His heart sank, and his limbs trembled nervously, as he came to an immense pile of building facing the canal on one side and the street on the other. This block was divided into a host of small tenements, tenanted by all sorts of trades. People were swarming in and out through the two doors. There were three or four *dvorniks*[2] belonging to the house, but the young man, to his great satisfaction, came across none of them, and, escaping notice as he entered, mounted at once the stairs on the right hand. He had already made acquaintance with this dark and narrow staircase, and its obscurity was grateful to him; it was gloomy enough to hide him from prying eyes. "If I feel so timid now, what will it be when I come to put my plan into execution?" thought he, as he reached the fourth floor. Here he found the passage blocked; some military porters were removing the furniture from a tenement recently occupied, as the young man knew, by a Ger-

[1] 1,000 yards.

[2] Janitors.

man official and his family. "Thanks to the departure of this German, for some time to come there will be no one on this landing but the old woman. It is as well to know this, at any rate," thought he to himself, as he rang the old woman's bell. It gave a faint sound, as if it were made of tin instead of copper. In houses of this sort, the smaller lodgings generally have such bells.

He had forgotten this; the peculiar tinkling sound seemed to recall something to his memory, for he gave a shiver—his nerves were very weak. In another moment the door was opened part way, and the occupant of the rooms stood examining her visitor through the opening with evident suspicion, her small eyes glimmering through the darkness like luminous points. But when she saw the people on the landing, she seemed reassured, and flung the door open. The young man entered a gloomy antechamber, divided by a partition, behind which was a small kitchen. The old woman stood silently in front of him, eying him keenly. She was a thin little creature of sixty, with a small sharp nose, and eyes sparkling with malice. Her head was uncovered, and her grizzled locks shone with grease. A strip of flannel was wound round her long thin neck, and, in spite of the heat, she wore a shabby yellow fur tippet on her shoulders. She coughed incessantly. The young man was probably eying her strangely, for the look of mistrust suddenly reappeared on her face.

"The Student Raskolnikoff. I called on you a month ago," said the visitor, hurriedly, with a slight bow. He had suddenly remembered that he must make himself more agreeable.

"I remember, *batuchka*, I remember it well," returned the old woman, still fixing her eyes on him suspiciously.

"Well, then, look here. I have come again on a similar errand," continued Raskolnikoff, somewhat surprised and uneasy at being received with so much distrust. "After all, this may be her usual manner, though I did not notice it before," thought he, unpleasantly impressed.

The old woman remained silent a while, and seemed to reflect. Then, pointing to the door of the inner room, she drew back for her visitor to pass, and said, "Come in, *batuchka*."[1]

The small room into which the young man was ushered was papered with yellow; there were geraniums and muslin curtains in the windows, and the setting sun shed a flood of light on the interior. "The sun will shine on it just the same *then*!" said Raskolnikoff all at once to himself, as he glanced rapidly round to take in the various objects and engrave them on his memory. The room, however, contained nothing remarkable. The yellow wood furniture was all very old. A couch with a shelving back, opposite which stood an oval table, a toilet-table with a pier glass attached, chairs lining the walls, and two or three poor prints representing German girls with birds in their hands, completed the inventory. A lamp was burning in one corner in front of a small image. The floor and furniture were clean and well polished. "Elizabeth attends to that," thought the young man. It would have been difficult to find a speck of dust on anything. "It is only in the houses of these dreadful old widows that such order is to be seen," continued Raskolnikoff to himself, looking with curiosity at the chintz curtain overhanging the door which led into a second small room, in which he had never set foot; it contained the old woman's bed and chest of drawers. The apartment consisted of these two rooms.

"What is it you want?" asked the mistress of the house dryly; she had followed her visitor in, and planted herself in front of him to examine him more closely.

"I have come to pawn something, that is all!" With this he drew from his pocket a flat old silver watch. A globe was engraved inside the lid, and the chain was of steel.

"But you have not repaid the sum I lent you before. It was due two days ago."

"I will pay you the interest for another month; have a little patience."

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[1] "Little father."

"I may have patience or I may sell your pledge at once, *batuchka*, just whichever I like."

"What will you give me on this watch, Alena Ivanovna?"

"That is a wretched thing, *batuchka*, worth a mere nothing. Last time I lent you two small notes on your ring, when I could have bought a new one at the jeweler's for a ruble and a half."

"Give me four rubles, and I will redeem it; it belonged to my father. I expect some money soon."

"A ruble and a half! and I shall take the interest in advance."

"A ruble and a half!" protested the young man.

"Please yourself whether you take it or not." So saying, the old woman tendered back the watch. Her visitor took it and was about to depart in vexation, when he reflected that this money lender was his last resource—and, besides, he had another object in coming.

"Come, fork out!" said he in a rough tone.

The old woman fumbled in her pockets for her keys, and passed on into the adjoining room. The young man, left standing there alone, pricked up his ears and began to make various inductions. He heard this female usurer open her drawer. "It must be the top one," was his conclusion. "I know now that she carries her keys in her right pocket—they are all hung on a steel ring—one of them is three times as large as the rest, and has the wards toothed; that cannot be the key of her drawer—then she must have some strong box or safe. It is curious that the keys of strong boxes should be generally like that—but, after all, how ignoble!"

The old woman reappeared. "See here, *batuchka*: if I take a ten-kopeck piece a month on each ruble, I ought to receive fifteen kopecks on a ruble and a half, the interest being payable in advance. Then, as you ask me to wait another month for the repayment of the two rubles I have already lent you, you owe me twenty kopecks more, which makes a total of five and thirty. What, therefore, I have to advance upon your watch is one ruble fifteen kopecks. Here it is."

"What! Is one ruble fifteen kopecks all you mean to give me now?"

"That is all that is due to you."

The young man took the money without further discussion. He looked at the old woman and was in no haste to depart. He seemed anxious to say or do something more, but without knowing exactly what. "Perhaps I may be bringing you some other article soon, Alena Ivanovna, a very pretty cigar case—a silver one—when I get it back from the friend to whom I have lent it." These words were uttered with much embarrassment.

"Well, we can talk about it then, *batuchka.*"

"Good-by. You are always alone—is your sister never with you?" asked he with as indifferent an air as he could assume, as he entered the anteroom.

"What have you to do with my sister, *batuchka*?"

"Nothing. I had no reason for asking. You will—well, good-by, Alena Ivanovna."

Raskolnikoff made his exit in a perturbed state of mind. As he went downstairs, he stopped from time to time, as if overcome by violent emotion. When he had at length emerged upon the street, he exclaimed to himself: "How loathsome it all is! Can I, can I ever?—no, it is absurd, preposterous!" added he mentally. "How could such a horrible idea ever enter my head? Could I ever be capable of such infamy? It is odious, ignoble, repulsive! And yet for a whole month——"

Words and exclamations, however, could not give full vent to his agitation. The loathing sense of disgust which had begun to oppress him on his way to the old woman's house had now become so intense that he longed to find some way of escape from the torture. He reeled along the pavement like a tipsy man, taking no notice of those who passed, but bumping against them. On looking round he saw a dram shop near at hand; steps led down from the footpath to the basement, and Raskolnikoff saw two drunkards coming out at that moment, leaning heavily on each other and exchanging abusive language. The young man barely paused before he descended the steps. He had never before entered such a place, but he felt dizzy and was also suffering from intense thirst. He had a craving for some beer, partly because he attributed his weakness to an empty stomach. Seating himself in a dark and dirty corner, in front of a filthy little table, he called for some beer, and eagerly drank off a glass.

He felt instantly relieved, and his brain began to clear: "How absurd I have been!" said he to himself, "there was really nothing to make me uneasy! It was simply physical! A glass of beer and a mouthful of biscuit were all that was necessary to restore my strength of mind and make my thoughts clear and resolution fixed. How paltry all this is!"

The next morning Raskolnikoff awoke late, after disturbed and unrefreshing slumbers. He felt very cross and glanced angrily round his room. It was a tiny place, not more than six feet in length, and its dirty buff paper hung in shreds, giving it a most miserable aspect; besides which, the ceiling was so low that a tall man would have felt in danger of bumping his head. The furniture was quite in harmony with the room, consisting of three old rickety chairs, a painted table in one corner, on which lay books and papers thick with dust (showing how long it was since they had been touched), and, finally, a large and very ugly sofa with ragged covers. This sofa, which filled nearly half the room, served Raskolnikoff as a bed. He often lay down on it in his clothes, without any sheets, covering himself with his old student's coat, and using instead of a pillow a little cushion, which he raised by keeping under it all his clean or dirty linen. Before the sofa stood a small table.

Raskolnikoff's misanthropy did not take offense at the dirty state of his den. Human faces had grown so distasteful to him, that the very sight of the servant whose business it was to clean the rooms produced a feeling of exasperation. To such a condition may monomaniacs come by continually brooding over one idea. For the last fortnight, the landlady had ceased to supply her lodger with provisions, and he had not yet thought of demanding an explanation. Nastasia, who had to cook and clean for the whole house, was not sorry to see the lodger in this state of mind, as it diminished her labors: she had quite given up tidying and dusting his room; the utmost she did was to come and sweep it once a week. She it was who was arousing him at this moment.

"Come, get up, why are you sleeping so late?" she exclaimed. "It is nine o'clock. I have brought up some tea, will you take a cup? How pale you look!"

Raskolnikoff opened his eyes, shook himself, and recognized Nastasia. "Has the landlady sent me this tea?" asked he, making a painful effort to sit up.

"Not much chance of that!" And the servant placed before him her own teapot, in which there was still some tea left, and laid two small lumps of brownish sugar on the table.

"Here, Nastasia, take this, please," said Raskolnikoff, fumbling in his pocket and drawing out a handful of small change (for he had again lain down in his clothes), "and fetch me a white roll. Go to the pork shop as well, and buy me a bit of cheap sausage."

"I will bring you the roll in a minute, but had you not better take some *shtchi* [1] instead of the sausage? We make it here, and it is capital. I kept some for you last night, but it was so late before you came in! You will find it very good." She went to fetch the *shtchi*, and, when Raskolnikoff had begun to eat, she seated herself on the sofa beside him and commenced to chatter, like a true country girl as she was. "Prascovia Paulovna means to report you to the police," said she.

The young man's brow clouded. "To the police? Why?"

"Because you don't pay and won't go. That's why."

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[1] Cabbage soup.

"The deuce!" growled he between his teeth, "that is the finishing stroke; it comes at a most unfortunate juncture. She is a fool," added he aloud. "I shall go and talk to her to-morrow."

"She is, of course, just as much of a fool as I am; but why do you, who are so intelligent, lie here doing nothing? How is it you never seem to have money for anything now? You used to give lessons, I hear; how is it you do nothing now?"

"I am engaged on something," returned Raskolnikoff dryly and half reluctantly.

"On what?"

"Some work——"

"What sort of work?"

"Thinking," replied he gravely, after a short silence.

Nastasia was convulsed. She was of a merry disposition, but her laughter was always noiseless, an internal convulsion which made her actually writhe with pain. "And does your thinking bring you any money?" asked she, as soon as she could manage to speak.

"Well! I can't give lessons when I have no boots to go out in? Besides, I despise them."

"Take care lest you suffer for it."

"There is so little to be made by giving lessons! What can one do with a few kopecks?" said he in an irritable tone, rather to himself than the servant.

"So you wish to make your fortune at one stroke?"

He looked at her rather strangely, and was silent for a moment. "Yes, my fortune," rejoined he impressively.

"Hush! you frighten me, you look terrible. Shall I go and fetch you a roll?"

"Just as you like."

Later in the day, Raskolnikoff went out and wandered about the streets. At last he sat down under a tree to rest, and fell into a reverie. His limbs felt disjointed, and his mind was in darkness and confusion. He placed his elbows on his knees and held his head with his hands.

"God! Am I to stand beating in her skull with a hatchet or something, wade in warm blood, break open the lock and rob and tremble, blood flowing all around, and hide myself, with the hatchet? O God! is this indeed possible, and must it be?" He trembled like a leaf as he said this.

"What am I thinking of?" he cried in some astonishment. "I know well I could not endure that with which I have been torturing myself. I saw that clearly yesterday when I tried to rehearse it. Perfectly plain. Then what am I questioning? Did I not say yesterday as I went up the stairs how disgusting and mean and low it all was, and did not I run away in terror?"

He stood up and looked all round, wondering how he got there, and moved off toward the T—— bridge. He was pale and his eyes were hot, and feebleness was in all his members, but he seemed to breathe easier. He felt that he had thrown off the old time which had been so oppressive; and in its place had come peace and light. "Lord!" he prayed, "show me my way, that I may renounce these horrid thoughts of mine!"

Going across the bridge, he quietly gazed on the Neva, and the clear red sunset. He did not feel himself tired now, notwithstanding his weakness, and the load which had lain upon his heart seemed to be gone. Liberty! Liberty! he was free from those enchantments and all their vile instigations. In later times when he recalled this period of his existence, and all that happened to him in those days, minute by minute and point by point, he recollected how each circumstance, although in the main not very unusual, constantly appeared to his mind as an evidence of the predetermination of his fate, so superstitious was he. Especially he could never understand why he, weary and harassed as he was, could not have returned home by the shortest route, instead of across the Haymarket, which was quite out of the way. Certainly, a dozen times before, he had reached his lodgings by most circuitous routes, and never known through which streets he had come. But why (he always asked) should such a really fateful meeting have taken place in the market (through which there was no need to go), and happen, too, at exactly such a time and at a moment of his life when his mind was in the state it was, and the event, in these circumstances, could only produce the most definite and decided effect upon his fate? Surely he was the instrument of some purpose!

It was about nine o'clock as he stood in the Haymarket. All the dealers had closed their establishments or cleared away their goods and gone home. About this place, with its tattered population, its dirty and nauseous courtyards and numerous alleys, Raskolnikoff dearly loved to roam in his aimless wanderings. He attracted no notice there. At the corner of K—— Lane were a dealer and his wife, who were engaged in packing up their wares, consisting of tapes, handkerchiefs, cotton, &c., preparatory to going home. They were lingering over their work, and conversing with an acquaintance. This was Elizabeth Ivanovna, or simple Elizabeth, as all called her, the younger sister of the old woman, Alena Ivanovna, to whose rooms Raskolnikoff went the day before for the purpose of pawning his watch to make his *rehearsal.* He knew all about this Elizabeth, as she knew also a little about him. She was a tall, awkward woman, about thirty-five years of age, timid and quiet, indeed almost an idiot, and was a regular slave to her sister, working for her day and night, trembling before her and enduring even blows. She was evidently hesitating about something, as she stood there with a bundle under her arm, and her friends were pressing some subject rather warmly. When Raskolnikoff recognized her he seemed struck with the greatest astonishment, although there was nothing strange about such a meeting.

"You ought to decide yourself, Elizabeth Ivanovna," said the man. "Come to-morrow at seven o'clock."

"To-morrow?" said Elizabeth slowly, as if undecided.

"She is frightened of Alena Ivanovna," cried the wife, a brisk little woman. "You are like a little child, Elizabeth Ivanovna, and she's not your own sister, but a stepsister. She has too much her own way."

"You say nothing to Alena Ivanovna," interrupted the man, "and come without asking, that's the way to do it, and your sister can manage herself."

"When shall I come?"

"At seven o'clock, to-morrow."

"Very well, I will come," said Elizabeth, slowly and reluctantly. She then quitted them.

Raskolnikoff also went away, and stayed to hear no more. His original amazement had changed gradually into a feeling of actual terror; a chill ran down his back. He had learned unexpectedly and positively, that, at seven o'clock the next evening, Elizabeth, the old woman's sister, the only person living with her, would not be at home, and that, therefore, the old woman, at seven o'clock to-morrow, *would be there alone.* It needed but a few steps to reach his room. He went along like one sentenced to death, with his reason clogged and numbed. He felt that now all liberty of action and free will were gone, and everything was irrevocably decided. A more convenient occasion than was thus unexpectedly offered to him now would never arise, and he might never learn again, beforehand, that, at a certain time on a certain day, she, on whom he was to make the attempt, would be entirely alone.

Raskolnikoff learned subsequently what induced the man and his wife to invite Elizabeth to call on them. It was a very simple matter. A foreign family, finding themselves in straitened circumstances, were desirous of parting with various things, consisting for the most part in articles of female attire. They were anxious, therefore, to meet with a dealer in cast-off clothes, and this was one of Elizabeth's callings. She had a large connection, because she was very honest and always stuck to her price: there was no higgling to be done with her. She was a woman of few words and very shy and reserved. But Raskolnikoff was very superstitious, and traces of this remained in him long after. In all the events of this period of his life he was ever ready to detect something mysterious, and attribute every circumstance to the presence of some particular influence upon his destiny.

The previous winter, a fellow student, Pokoreff by name, on leaving for Charkoff, had happened to communicate to him in conversation the address of Alena Ivanovna, in case he should ever require to pawn anything. For a long time he did not use it, as he was giving lessons, and managed somehow to get along, but six weeks before this time he had recollected the address. He had two things fit to pawn — an old silver watch, formerly his father's; and a small gold ring with three red stones, a souvenir from his sister on leaving home. He decided on getting rid of the latter, and went to the old woman's. At the first glance, and knowing nothing whatever of her personally, she inspired him with an unaccountable loathing. He took her two notes, and on leaving went into a poor *traktir*, or restaurant, and ordered some tea. He sat down musing, and strange thoughts flitted across his mind and became hatched in his brain. Close by, at another table, were seated a student, whom he did not know, and a young officer. They had been playing billiards, and were now drinking tea. Suddenly Raskolnikoff heard the student give the officer the address of Alena Ivanovna, the widow of a professor, as one who lent money on pledges. This alone struck Raskolnikoff as very peculiar. They were talking of the same person he had just been to see. No doubt it was pure chance, but, at the moment he was struggling against an impression he could not overcome, this stranger's words came and gave extra force to it. The student went on talking, and began to give his companion some account of Alena Ivanovna.

"She is well known," he said, "and always good for money. She is as rich as a Jew, and can advance five thousand rubles at a moment's notice; yet she will take in pledge objects worth as little as a ruble. She is quite a providence to many of our fellows—but such an old hag! I tell you what I would do. I would kill that damnable old hag, and take all she is possessed of, without any qualm of conscience," exclaimed the student excitedly. The officer laughed, but Raskolnikoff shuddered. The words just uttered so strongly echoed his own thoughts. "Let me put a serious question to you," resumed the student, more and more excited. "I have hitherto been joking, but now listen to this. On the one side here is a silly, flint-hearted, evil-minded, sulky old woman, necessary to no one—on the contrary, pernicious to all—and who does not know herself why she lives."

"Well?" said the officer.

"Hear me further. On the other hand, young fresh strength droops and is lost for want of sustenance; this is the case with thousands everywhere! A hundred, a thousand good deeds and enterprises could be carried out and upheld with the money this old woman has bequeathed to a monastery. A dozen families might be saved from hunger, want, ruin, crime, and misery, and all with her money! Kill her, I say, take it from her, and dedicate it to the service of humanity and the general good! What is your opinion? Shall not one little crime be effaced and atoned for by a thousand good deeds? For one useless life a thousand lives saved from decay and death. One death, and a hundred beings restored to existence! There's a calculation for you. What in proportion is the life of this miserable old woman? No more than the life of a flea, a beetle, nay, not even that, for she is pernicious. She preys on other lives. She lately bit Elizabeth's finger, in a fit of passion, and nearly bit it off!"

"Certainly she does not deserve to live," observed the officer, "but nature——"

"Ah, my friend, nature has to be governed and guided, or we should be drowned in prejudices. Without it there would never be one great man. They say 'duty is conscience.' Now I have nothing to say against duty and conscience, but let us see, how do we understand them? Let me put another question to you. Listen."

"Stop a minute, I will give you one."

"Well?"

"After all you have said and declaimed, tell me—are you going to kill the old woman *yourself*, or not?"

"Of course not. I only pointed out the inequality of things. As for the deed——"

"Well, if you won't, it's my opinion that it would not be just to do so! Come, let's have another game!"

Raskolnikoff was in the greatest agitation. Still, there was nothing extraordinary in this conversation; it was not the first time he had heard, only in other forms and on other topics, such ideas from the lips of the young and hot-headed. But why should he, of all men, happen to overhear such a conversation and such ideas, when the very same thoughts were being engendered in himself?—and why precisely *then*, immediately on his becoming possessed of them and on leaving the old woman? Strange, indeed, did this coincidence appear to him. This idle conversation was destined to have a fearful influence on his destiny, extending to the most trifling incident and causing him to feel sure he was the instrument of a fixed purpose.

On his return from the market, he flung himself upon his couch and sat motionless for a whole hour. It became dark, he had no light, but sat on. He could never afterwards recollect his thoughts at the time. At last he felt cold, and a shiver ran through him. He recognized with delight that he was sitting on his couch and could lie down, and soon he fell into a deep, heavy sleep. He slept much longer than usual, and his slumbers were undisturbed by dreams. Nastasia, who came to his room the next morning at ten o'clock, had great difficulty in awakening him. The servant brought him some bread and, the same as the day before, what was left of her tea.

"Not up yet!" exclaimed she indignantly. "How can you sleep so long?"

Raskolnikoff raised himself with an effort; his head ached; he got upon his feet, took a few steps, and then dropped down again upon the couch.

"What, again!" cried Nastasia, "but you must be ill then?" He did not answer. "Would you like some tea?"

"By and by," he muttered painfully, after which he closed his eyes and turned his face to the wall. Nastasia, standing over him, remained watching him for a while.

"After all, he's perhaps ill," said she, before withdrawing.

At two o'clock she returned with some soup. Raskolnikoff was still lying on the couch. He had not touched the tea. The servant became angry and shook the lodger violently. "Whatever makes you sleep thus?" scolded she, eying him contemptuously.

He sat up, but answered not a word, and remained with his eyes fixed on the floor.

"Are you ill, or are you not?" asked Nastasia. This second question met with no more answer than the first. "You should go out," continued she, after a pause, "the fresh air would do you good. You'll eat something, will you not?"

"By and by," answered he feebly. "Go away!" and he motioned her off. She remained a moment longer, watching him with an air of pity, and then left the room.

After a few minutes he raised his eyes, gave a long look at the tea and soup, and then began to eat. He swallowed three or four spoonfuls without the least appetite—almost mechanically. His head felt better. When he had finished his light repast, he again lay down on the couch, but he could not sleep and remained motionless, flat on his stomach, his face buried in the pillow. His reverie kept conjuring up strange scenes. At one time he was in Africa, in Egypt, on some oasis, where palms were dotted about. The caravans were at rest, the camels lay quietly, and the travelers were eating their evening meal. They drank water direct from the stream which ran murmuring close by. How refreshing was the marvelously blue water, and how beautifully clear it looked as it ran over many-colored stones and mingled with the golden spangles of the sandy bottom! All at once he clearly heard the hour chiming. He shuddered, raised his head, looked at the window to calculate the time. He came to himself immediately and jumped up, and, going on tiptoe, silently opened the door and stood listening on the landing. His heart beat violently. But not a sound came from the staircase. It seemed as though the house was wrapped in sleep. He could not understand how he had been able to sleep away the time as he had done, while nothing was prepared for the enterprise. And yet it was, perhaps, six o'clock that had just struck.

Then, he became excited as he felt what there was to be done, and he endeavored with all his might to keep his thoughts from wandering and concentrate his mind on his task. All the time his heart thumped and beat until he could hardly draw breath. In the first place it was necessary to make a loop and fasten to his coat. He went to his pillow and took from among the linen he kept there an old and dirty shirt and tore part of it into strips. He then fastened a couple of these together, and, taking off his coat—a stout cotton summer one—began to sew the loop inside, under the left arm. His hands shook violently, but he accomplished his task satisfactorily, and when he again put on his coat nothing was visible. Needle and thread had been procured long ago, and lay on the table in a piece of paper. The loop was provided for a hatchet. It would never have done to have appeared in the streets carrying a hatchet, and if he placed it under the coat, it would have been necessary to hold it with his hands; but with the loop all he had to do was to put the iron in it and it would hang of itself under the coat, and with his hands in his pockets he could keep it from shaking, and no one could suspect that he was carrying anything. He had thought over all this about a fortnight before.

Having finished his task, Raskolnikoff inserted his finger in a small crevice in the floor under his couch, and brought out the *pledge* with which he had been careful to provide himself. This pledge was, however, only a sham—a thin smooth piece of wood about the size and thickness of a silver cigarette case, which he had found in a yard adjoining a carpenter's shop, and a thin piece of iron of about the same size, which he had picked up in the street. He fastened the two together firmly with thread, then proceeded to wrap them up neatly in a piece of clean white paper, and tie the parcel in such a manner that it would be difficult to undo it again. This was all done in order to occupy the attention of the old woman and to seize a favorable opportunity when she would be busy with the knot. The piece of iron was simply added for weight, in order that she might not immediately detect the fraud. He had just finished, and had put the packet in his pocket, when in the court below resounded the cry:

"Six o'clock struck long ago!"

"Long ago! Good heavens!"

He ran to the door, listened, seized his hat, and went down the stairs cautiously and stealthily as a cat. He still had the most important thing to do—to steal the hatchet out of the kitchen. That a hatchet was the best instrument, he had long since decided. He had an old garden knife, but on a knife—especially on his own strength—he could not rely; he finally fixed on the hatchet. A peculiarity was to be noticed in all these resolutions of his; the more definitely they were settled, the more absurd and horrible they immediately appeared to his eyes, and never, for a moment, did he feel sure of the execution of his project. But even if every question had been settled, every doubt cleared away, every difficulty overcome, he would probably have renounced his design on the instant, as something absurd, monstrous, and impossible. But there were still a host of matters to arrange, of problems to solve. As to procuring the hatchet, this trifle did not trouble Raskolnikoff in the least, for nothing was easier. As a matter of fact Nastasia was scarcely ever at home, especially of an evening. She was constantly out gossiping with friends or tradespeople, and that was the reason of her mistress's constant complaints. When the time came, all he would have to do would be to quietly enter the kitchen and take the hatchet, and then to replace it an hour afterwards when all was over. But perhaps this would not be as easy as he fancied. "Suppose," said the young man to himself, "that when, in an hour's time, I come to replace the hatchet, Nastasia should have come in. Now, in that case, I could naturally not enter the kitchen until she had gone out again. But supposing during this time she notices the absence of the hatchet, she will grumble, perhaps kick up a shindy, and that will serve to denounce me, or at least might do so!"

Before he had got to the bottom of the staircase, a trifling circumstance came and upset all his plans. On reaching his landlady's landing, he found the kitchen door wide open, as usual, and he peeped in, in order to make sure that, in the absence of Nastasia, her mistress was not there, and that the doors of the other rooms were closed. But great was his annoyance to find Nastasia there herself, engaged in hanging clothes on a line. Perceiving the young man, she stopped and turned to him inquiringly. He averted his eyes and went away without remark. But the affair was done for. There was no hatchet, he was frustrated entirely. He felt crushed, nay, humiliated, but a feeling of brutal vindictiveness at his disappointment soon ensued, and he continued down the stairs, smiling maliciously to himself. He stood hesitating at the gate. To walk about the streets or to go back were equally repugnant. "To think that I have missed such a splendid opportunity!" he murmured as he stood aimlessly at the entrance, leaning near the open door of the porter's lodge. Suddenly he started—something in the dark room attracted his eye. He looked quietly around. No one was near. He descended the two steps on tiptoe, and called for the porter. There was no reply, and he rushed headlong to the hatchet (it was a hatchet), secured it where it lay among some wood, and hurriedly fastened it to the loop as he made his way out into the street. No one saw him! "There's more of the devil in this than my design," he said smiling to himself. The occurrence gave him fresh courage.

He went away quietly in order not to excite any suspicion, and walked along the street with his eyes studiously fixed on the ground, avoiding the faces of the passers-by. Suddenly he recollected his hat. "Good heavens! the day before yesterday I had money, and not to have thought of that! I could so easily have bought a cap!" and he began cursing himself. Glancing casually in a shop, he saw it was ten minutes past seven. He had yet a long way to go, as he was making a circuit, not wishing to walk direct to the house. He kept off, as much as he was able, all thought of his mission, and on the way reflected upon possible improvements of the public grounds, upon the desirability of fountains, and why people lived where there were neither parks nor fountains, but only mud, lime, and bricks, emitting horrid exhalations and every conceivable foulness. This reminded him of his own walks about the Cyennaza, and he came to himself.

" How true it is that persons being led to execution interest themselves in anything that strikes them on the way!" was the thought that came into his head, but it passed away like lightning to be succeeded by some other. " Here we are—there is the gate." It struck half-past seven as he stood near the house.

To his delight, he passed in without observation. As if on purpose, at the very same moment a load of hay was going in, and it completely screened him. On the other side of the load, a dispute or brawl was evidently taking place, and he gained the old woman's staircase in a second. Recovering his breath and pressing his hand to his beating heart, he commenced the ascent, though first feeling for the hatchet and arranging it. Every minute he stopped to listen. The stairs were quite deserted, and every door was closed. No one met him. On the second floor, indeed, the door of an empty lodging was wide open; some painters were working there, but they did not look up. He stopped a moment to think, and then continued the ascent: " No doubt it would be better if they were not there, but fortunately there are two more floors above them." At last he reached the fourth floor, and Alena Ivanovna's door; the lodging facing it was unoccupied. The lodging on the third floor, just beneath the old woman's, was also apparently empty. The card that used to be on the door had gone; the lodgers had, no doubt, moved. Raskolnikoff was stifling. He stood hesitating a moment: " Had I not better go away?" But without answering the question, he waited and listened. Not a sound issued from the old woman's apartments. The staircase was filled with the same silence. After listening for a long time, the young man cast a last glance around, and again felt his hatchet. "Do I not look too pale?" thought he. "Do I not appear too agitated? She is mistrustful. I should do well to wait a little, to give my emotion time to calm down."

But instead of becoming quieter, his heart throbbed more violently. He could stand it no longer, and, raising his hand toward the bell rope, he pulled it toward him. After waiting half a minute, he rang again—this time a little louder. No answer. To ring like a deaf man would have been useless, stupid even. The old woman was certainly at home; but, suspicious by nature, she was likely to be so all the more then, as she happened to be alone. Raskolnikoff knew something of Alena Ivanovna's habits. He therefore placed his ear to the door. Had the circumstances amid which he was placed strangely developed his power of hearing, which, in general, is difficult to admit, or was the sound really easily perceptible? Anyhow, he suddenly became aware that a hand was being cautiously placed on the lock, and that a dress rustled against the door. Some one inside was going through exactly the same movements as he on the landing. Some one, standing up against the lock, was listening while trying to hide her presence, and had probably her ear also against the door.

In order to avoid all idea of mystery, the young man purposely moved about rather noisily, and muttered something half aloud; then he rang a third time, but gently and coolly, without allowing the bell to betray the least sign of impatience. Raskolnikoff never forgot this moment of his life. When, in after days, he thought over it, he could never understand how he had been able to display such cunning, especially at a time when emotion was now and again depriving him of the free use of his intellectual and physical faculties. After a short while he heard the bolt withdrawn.

The door, as before, was opened a little, and again the two eyes, with mistrustful glance, peeped out of the dark Then Raskolnikoff lost his presence of mind and made a serious mistake. Fearing that the old woman would take alarm at finding they were alone, and knowing that his appearance would not reassure her, he took hold of the door and pulled it toward him in order to prevent her shutting it again if she should be thus minded. Seeing this, she held on to the lock, so that he almost drew her together with the door on to the staircase. She recovered herself, and stood to prevent his entrance, speechless with fright.

"Good evening, Alena Ivanovna," he commenced, trying to speak with unconcern, but his voice did not obey him, and he faltered and trembled, "Good evening, I have brought you something, but we had better go into the light." He pushed past her and entered the room uninvited. The old woman followed and found her tongue.

"What is it you want? Who are you?" she commenced.

"Pardon me, Alena Ivanovna, your old acquaintance Raskolnikoff. I have brought a pledge, as I promised the other day," and he held out the packet to her.

The old woman was about to examine it, when she raised her eyes and looked straight into those of the visitor who had entered so unceremoniously. She examined him attentively, distrustfully, for a minute. Raskolnikoff fancied there was a gleam of mockery in her look as if she guessed all. He felt he was changing color, and that if she kept her glance upon him much longer without saying a word he would be obliged to run away.

"Why are you looking at me thus?" he said at last in anger. "Will you take it or not? or shall I take it elsewhere? I have no time to waste." He did not intend to say this, but the words came out. The tone seemed to quiet her suspicions.

"Why were you so impatient, *batuchka?* What is it?" she asked, glancing at the pledge.

"The silver cigarette case of which I spoke the other day."

She held out her hand. "But why are you so pale, why do your hands shake? What is the matter with you, *batuchka?*"

"Fever," replied he abruptly. "You would be pale too if you had nothing to eat." He could hardly speak the words and felt his strength failing. But there was some plausibility in his reply; and the old woman took the pledge.

"What is it?" she asked once more, weighing it in her hand and looking straight at her visitor.

"Cigarette case, silver, look at it."

"It doesn't feel as though it were silver. Oh! what a dreadful knot!"

She began to untie the packet and turned to the light (all the windows were closed in spite of the heat). Her back was turned toward Raskolnikoff, and for a few seconds she paid no further attention to him. He opened his coat, freed the hatchet from the loop, but did not yet take it from its hiding place; he held it with his right hand beneath the garment. His limbs were weak, each moment they grew more numbed and stiff. He feared his fingers would relax their hold of the hatchet. Then his head turned giddy.

"What is this you bring me?" cried Alena Ivanovna, turning to him in a rage.

There was not a moment to lose now. He pulled out the hatchet, raised it with both hands, and let it descend without force, almost mechanically, on the old woman's head. But directly he had struck the blow his strength returned. According to her usual habit, Alena Ivanovna was bareheaded. Her scanty gray locks, greasy with oil, were gathered in one thin plait, which was fixed to the back of her neck by means of a piece of horn comb. The hatchet struck her just on the sinciput, and this was partly owing to her small stature. She scarcely uttered a faint cry and collapsed at once all in a heap on the floor; she was dead.

The murderer laid his hatchet down and at once began to search the corpse, taking the greatest precaution not to get stained with the blood; he remembered seeing Alena Ivanovna, on the occasion of his last visit, take her keys from the right-hand pocket of her dress. He was in full possession of his intellect; he felt neither giddy nor dazed, but his hands continued to shake. Later on, he recollected that he had been very prudent, very attentive, that he had taken every care not to soil himself. It did not take him long to find the keys; the same as the other day, they were all together on a steel ring. Having secured them, Raskolnikoff at once passed into the bedroom. It was a very small apartment; on one side was a large glass case full of holy images, on the other a great bed looking very clean with its quilted-silk patchwork coverlet. The third wall was occupied by a chest of drawers. Strange to say, the young man had no sooner attempted to open them, he had no sooner commenced to try the keys, than a kind of shudder ran through his frame. Again the idea came to him to give up his task and go away, but this weakness only lasted a second: it was now too late to draw back.

He was even smiling at having for a moment entertained such a thought, when he was suddenly seized with a terrible anxiety: suppose the old woman were still alive, suppose she recovered consciousness. Leaving at once the keys and the drawers, he hastened to the corpse, seized the hatchet, and prepared to strike another blow at his victim, but he found there was no necessity to do so. Alena Ivanovna was dead beyond all doubt. Leaning over her again to examine her closer, Raskolnikoff saw that the skull was shattered. He was about to touch her with his fingers, but drew back, as it was quite unnecessary. There was a pool of blood upon the floor. Suddenly noticing a bit of cord round the old woman's neck, the young man gave it a tug, but the gory stuff was strong, and did not break. The murderer then tried to remove it by drawing it down the body. But this second attempt was no more successful than the first, the cord encountered some obstacle and became fixed. Burning with impatience, Raskolnikoff brandished the hatchet, ready to strike the corpse and sever the confounded string at the same blow. However, he could not make up his mind to proceed with such brutality. At last, after trying for two minutes, and stain-ing his hands with blood, he succeeded in severing the cord with the blade of the hatchet without further disfiguring the dead body. As he had imagined, there was a purse suspended to the old woman's neck. Besides this there was also a small enameled medal and two crosses, one of cypress wood, the other of brass. The greasy purse, a little chamois-leather bag, was as full as it could hold. Raskolnikoff thrust it in his pocket without examining the contents. He then threw the crosses on his victim's breast, and hastily returned to the bedroom, taking the hatchet with him.

His impatience was now intense, he seized the keys, and again set to work. But all his attempts to open the drawers were unavailing, and this was not so much owing to the shaking of his hands as to his continual misconceptions. He could see, for instance, that a certain key would not fit the lock, and yet he continued to try and insert it. All on a sudden he recalled a conjecture he had formed on the occasion of his preceding visit: the big key with the toothed wards, which was attached to the ring with the smaller ones, probably belonged, not to the drawers, but to some box in which the old woman, no doubt, hoarded up her valuables. Without further troubling about the drawers, he at once looked under the bed, aware that old women are in the habit of hiding their treasures in such places. And there indeed was a trunk with rounded lid, covered with red morocco and studded with steel nails. Raskolnikoff was able to insert the key in the lock without the least difficulty. When he opened the box he perceived a hareskin cloak trimmed with red lying on a white sheet; beneath the fur was a silk dress, and then a shawl, the rest of the contents appeared to be nothing but rags. The young man commenced by wiping his blood-stained hands on the red trimming. " It will not show so much on red." Then he suddenly seemed to change his mind: " Heavens! am I going mad? " thought he with fright.

But scarcely had he touched these clothes than a gold watch rolled from under the fur. He then overhauled everything in the box. Among the rags were various gold trinkets, which had all probably been pledged with the old woman: bracelets, chains, earrings, scarf pins, &c. Some were in their cases, while the others were tied up with tape in pieces of newspaper folded in two. Raskolnikoff did not hesitate, he laid hands on these jewels, and stowed them away in the pockets of his coat and trousers, without opening the cases or untying the packets; but he was soon interrupted in his work——

Footsteps resounded in the other room. He stopped short, frozen with terror. But the noise having ceased, he was already imagining he had been mistaken, when suddenly he distinctly heard a faint cry, or rather a kind of feeble interrupted moan. At the end of a minute or two, everything was again as silent as death. Raskolnikoff had seated himself on the floor beside the trunk and was waiting, scarcely daring to breathe; suddenly he bounded up, caught up the hatchet, and rushed from the bedroom. In the center of the apartment, Elizabeth, a huge bundle in her hands, stood gazing in a terror-stricken way at her dead sister; white as a sheet, she did not seem to have the strength to call out. On the sudden appearance of the murderer, she began to quake in every limb, and nervous twitches passed over her face; she tried to raise her arm, to open her mouth, but she was unable to utter the least cry, and, slowly retreating, her gaze still riveted on Raskolnikoff, she sought refuge in a corner. The poor woman drew back in perfect silence, as though she had no breath left in her body. The young man rushed upon her, brandishing the hatchet; the wretched creature's lips assumed the doleful expression peculiar to quite young children when, beginning to feel frightened of something, they gaze fixedly at the object which has raised their alarm, and are on the point of crying out. Terror had so completely stupefied this unfortunate Elizabeth, that, though threatened by the hatchet, she did not even think of protecting her face by holding her hands before her head, with that mechanical gesture which the instinct of self-preservation prompts on such occasions. She scarcely raised her left arm, and extended it slowly in the direction of the murderer, as thought to keep him off. The hatchet penetrated her skull, laying it open from the upper part of the forehead to the crown. Elizabeth fell down dead. No longer aware of what he did, Raskolnikoff took the bundle from his victim's hand, then dropped it and ran to the anteroom.

He was more and more terrified, especially after this second murder, entirely unpremeditated by him. He was in a hurry to be gone; had he then been in a state to see things more clearly, had he only been able to form an idea of the difficulties besetting his position, to see how desperate, how hideous, how absurd it was, to understand how many obstacles there still remained for him to surmount, perhaps even crimes to commit, to escape from this house and return home, he would most likely have withdrawn from the struggle, and have gone at once and given himself up to justice; it was not cowardice which would have prompted him to do so, but the horror of what he had done. This last impression became more and more powerful every minute. Nothing in the world could now have made him return to the trunk, nor even reënter the room in which it lay. Little by little his mind became diverted by other thoughts, and he lapsed into a kind of reverie; at times the murderer seemed to forget his position, or rather the most important part of it, and to concentrate his attention on trifles. After a while, happening to glance in the kitchen, he observed a pail half full of water, standing on a bench, and that gave him the idea of washing his hands and the hatchet. The blood had made his hands sticky. After plunging the blade of the hatchet in the water, he took a small piece of soap which lay on the window sill, and commenced his ablutions. When he had washed his hands, he set to cleaning the iron part of his weapon; then he devoted three minutes to soaping the wooden handle. which was also stained with blood.

After this he wiped it with a cloth which had been hung up to dry on a line stretched across the kitchen. This done, he drew near the window and carefully examined the hatchet for some minutes. The accusing stains had disappeared, but the handle was still damp. Raskolnikoff carefully hid the weapon under his coat by replacing it in the loop; after which, he minutely inspected his clothes, that is to say so far as the dim light of the kitchen allowed him to do so. He saw nothing suspicious about the coat and trousers, but there were bloodstains on the boots. He removed them with the aid of a damp rag. But these precautions only half reassured him, for he knew that he could not see properly and that certain stains had very likely escaped him. He stood irresolute in the middle of the room, a prey to a somber, agonizing thought, the thought that he was going mad, that at that moment he was not in a fit state to come to a determination and to watch over his security, that his way of going to work was probably not the one the circumstances demanded. " Good heavens! I ought to go, to go away at once!" murmured he, and he rushed to the anteroom where the greatest terror he had yet experienced awaited him.

He stood stock-still, not daring to believe his eyes: the door of the lodging, the outer door which opened on to the landing, the same one at which he had rung a little while before and by which he had entered, was open; up till then it had remained ajar, the old woman had no doubt omitted to close it by way of precaution; it had been neither locked nor bolted! But he had seen Elizabeth after that. How was it that it had not occurred to him that she had come in by way of the door? She could not have entered the lodging through the wall. He shut the door and bolted it. " But no, that is not what I should do? I must go away, go away." He drew back the bolt and, after opening the door again, stood listening on the landing.

He stood thus a long while. Down below, probably at the street door, two noisy voices were vociferating insults.

"Who can those people be?" He waited patiently. At last the noise ceased, the brawlers had taken their departure. The young man was about to do the same, when a door on the floor immediately below was noisily opened and some one went downstairs, humming a tune. "Whatever are they all up to?" wondered Raskolnikoff, and closing the door again he waited a while. At length all became silent as before; but just as he was preparing to go down, he suddenly became aware of a fresh sound, footsteps as yet far off, at the bottom of the staircase; and he no sooner heard them than he guessed the truth:—some one was coming *there*, to the old woman's on the fourth floor. Whence came this presentiment? What was there so particularly significant in the sound of these footsteps? They were heavy, regular, and rather slow than hurried. *He* has now reached the first floor, he still continues to ascend. The sound is becoming plainer and plainer. He pants as though with asthma at each step he takes. He has commenced the third flight. He will soon be on the fourth! And Raskolnikoff felt suddenly seized as with a general paralysis, the same as happens when a person has the nightmare and fancies himself pursued by enemies; they are on the point of catching him, they will kill him, and yet he remains spellbound, unable to move a limb.

The stranger was now ascending the fourth flight. Raskolnikoff, who until then had been riveted to the landing with fright, was at length able to shake off his torpor, and hastily reëntered the apartment, closing the door behind him. Then he bolted it, being careful to make as little noise as possible. Instinct rather than reason prompted him to do this. When he had finished, he remained close to the door, listening, scarcely daring to breathe. The visitor was now on the landing. Only the thickness of the door separated the two men. The unknown was in the same position toward Raskolnikoff as the latter had been a little while before toward the old woman. The visitor stood panting for some little time.

"He must be stout and big," thought the young man as he clasped the hatchet firmly in his hand. It was all like a dream to him. The visitor gave a violent pull at the bell. He immediately fancied he heard something move inside. He listened attentively during a few seconds, then he gave another ring and again waited; suddenly losing patience, he began to shake the door handle with all his might. Raskolnikoff watched with terror the bolt trembling in the socket, expecting to see it shoot back at any moment, so violent were the jerks given to the door. It occurred to him to hold the bolt in its place with his hand, but the *man* might have found it out. His head was turning quite dizzy again. "I shall betray myself!" thought he; but he suddenly recovered his presence of mind as the unknown broke the silence.

"Are they both asleep, or has some one strangled them? The thrice-confounded creatures!" growled the visitor in a guttural voice. "Hi! Alena Ivanovna, you old sorceress! Elizabeth Ivanovna, you indescribable beauty!—open! Oh! the witches! can they be asleep?"

In his exasperation he rang ten times running, and as loud as he possibly could. This man was evidently not a stranger there, and was in the habit of being obeyed. At the same moment some light and rapid footsteps resounded on the staircase. It was another person coming to the fourth floor. Raskolnikoff was not at first aware of the newcomer's arrival.

"Is it possible that there's no one at home?" said the latter in a loud and hearty tone of voice, addressing the first visitor who was still tugging at the bell pull. "Good day, Koch!"

"Judging by his voice, he must be quite a young man," immediately thought Raskolnikoff.

"The devil only knows! I've almost smashed the lock," replied Koch. "But how is it you know me?"

"What a question! The day before yesterday I played you at billiards, at Gambrinus's, and won three games right off."

"Ah!"

"So they're not at home? That's strange. I might almost say it's ridiculous. Where can the old woman have gone? I want to speak with her."

"And I too, *batuchka*, I want to speak with her."

"Well, what's to be done? I suppose we must go back to whence we came. I wanted to borrow some money of her!" exclaimed the young man.

"Of course we must go back again; but why then did she make an appointment? She herself, the old witch, told me to come at this hour. And it's a long way to where I live. Where the deuce can she be? I don't understand it. She never stirs from one year's end to the other, the old witch; she quite rots in the place, her legs have always got something the matter with them, and now all on a sudden she goes gallivanting about!"

"Suppose we question the porter?"

"What for?"

"To find out where she's gone and when she will be back."

"Hum!—the deuce!—question!—but she never goes anywhere." And he again tugged at the door handle. "The devil take her! there's nothing to be done but to go."

"Wait!" suddenly exclaimed the young man, "look!—do you notice how the door resists when we pull it?"

"Well, what then?"

"Why, that shows that it's not locked, but bolted! Hark how it clinks!"

"Well?"

"Don't you understand? That shows that one of them must be at home. If both were out, they would have locked the door after them, and not have bolted it inside. Listen, don't you hear the noise it makes? Well, to bolt one's door, one must be at home, you understand. Therefore it follows that they are at home, only for some reason or other they don't open the door!"

"Why, yes, you're right!" exclaimed the astonished

Koch. "So they're there, are they?" And he again shook the door violently.

"Stay!" resumed the young man, "don't pull like that. There's something peculiar about this. You've rung, you've pulled at the door with all your might, and they haven't answered you; therefore, they've either both fainted away, or——"

"What?"

"This is what we had better do: have the porter up, so that he may find out what's the matter."

"That's not a bad idea!"

They both started downstairs.

"Stop! you stay here; I'll fetch the porter."

"Why stay here?"

"Well, one never knows what might happen——"

"All right."

"You see, I might also pass for an examining magistrate! There's something very peculiar about all this, that's evident, e-vi-dent!" said the young man excitedly, and he hastily made his way down the stairs.

Left alone, Koch rang again, but gently this time; then, with a thoughtful air, he began to play with the door handle, turning it first one way, then the other, so as to make sure the door was only bolted. After this, with a great deal of puffing and blowing, he stooped down to look through the keyhole, but the key was in the lock, and turned in such a way that one could not see through. Standing up on the other side of the door, Raskolnikoff still held the hatchet in his hands. He was almost in a state of delirium and was preparing to attack the two men the moment they forced an entrance. More than once, on hearing them knocking and planning together, he had felt inclined to put an end to the matter there and then by calling out to them. At times he experienced a desire to abuse and defy them, while awaiting their irruption. "The sooner it's over the better!" he kept thinking.

"The devil take them!" The time passed; still no one came. Koch was beginning to lose patience. "The devil take them!" he muttered again, and, tired of waiting, he relinquished his watch to go and find the young man. By degrees the sound of his heavy boots echoing on the stairs ceased to be heard.

"Heavens! What shall I do?"

Raskolnikoff drew back the bolt and opened the door a few inches. Reassured by the silence which reigned in the house, and, moreover, scarcely in a fit state at the time to reflect on what he did, he went out on to the landing, shut the door behind him as securely as he could and turned to go downstairs. He had already descended several steps when suddenly a great uproar arose from one of the floors below. Where could he hide? Concealment was impossible, so he hastened upstairs again.

"Hi there! hang it! stop!"

He who uttered these cries had just burst out of one of the lodgings, and was rushing down the stairs as fast as his legs would carry him, yelling the while: "Dmitri! Dmitri! Dmitri! May the devil take the fool!"

The rest died away in the distance; the man who was uttering these cries had already left the house far behind. All was once more silent; but scarcely was this alarm over than a fresh one succeeded it: several individuals talking together in a loud tone of voice were noisily coming up the stairs. There were three or four of them. Raskolnikoff recognized the young man's sonorous accents. "It is they!" No longer hoping to escape them, he advanced boldly to meet them: "Let happen what will!" said he to himself: "if they stop me, all is over; if they let me pass, all is over just the same: they will remember passing me on the stairs." They were about to encounter him, only one flight separated them—when suddenly he felt himself saved! A few steps from him, to the right, there was an empty lodging with the door wide open, it was that same one on the second floor where he had seen the painters working, but, by a happy chance, they had just left it. It was they, no doubt, who a few minutes before had gone off, uttering those shouts. The paint on the floors was quite fresh, the workmen had left their things in the middle of the room: a small tub, some paint in an earthenware crock, and a big brush. In the twinkling of an eye, Raskolnikoff glided into the deserted apartment and hid himself as best he could up against the wall. It was none too soon: his pursuers were already on the landing; they did not stop there, however, but went on up to the fourth floor, talking loudly among themselves. After waiting till they had got some distance off, he left the room on tiptoe and hurried down as fast as his legs would carry him. No one on the stairs! No one either at the street door! He stepped briskly outside, and, once in the street, turned to the left.

He knew very well, he knew without a doubt, that they who were seeking him were at that moment in the old woman's lodging, and were amazed to find that the door, which a little while before had been shut so securely, was now open. "They're examining the corpses," thought he; "it won't take them a minute to come to the conclusion that the murderer managed to hide himself from them as they went up the stairs; perhaps they may even have a suspicion that he stowed himself away in the empty lodging on the second floor while they were hurrying to the upper part of the house." But, in spite of these reflections, he did not dare to increase his pace, though he still had a hundred steps or so to go before reaching the first turning. "Suppose I slipped into some doorway, in some out-of-the-way street, and waited there a few minutes? No, that would never do! I might throw my hatchet away somewhere? or take a cab? No good! no good!" At last he reached a narrow lane; he entered it more dead than alive. There, he was almost in safety, and he knew it: in such a place, suspicion could hardly be fixed upon him; while, on the other hand, it was easier for him to avoid notice by mingling with the crowd. But all these agonizing events had so enfeebled him that he could scarcely keep on his legs. Great drops of perspiration streamed down his face; his neck was quite wet. "I think you've had your fill!" shouted some one who took him for a drunken man as he reached the canal bank.

He no longer knew what he was doing; the farther he went, the more obscure became his ideas. However, when he found himself on the quay, he became frightened at seeing so few people there, and, fearing that he might be noticed on so deserted a spot, he returned to the lane. Though he had hardly the strength to put one leg before the other, he nevertheless took the longest way to reach his home. He had scarcely recovered his presence of mind even when he crossed the threshold; at least the thought of the hatchet never came to him until he was on the stairs. Yet the question he had to solve was a most serious one: it consisted in returning the hatchet to the place he had taken it from, and in doing so without attracting the least attention. Had he been more capable of considering his position, he would certainly have understood that, instead of replacing the hatchet, it would be far safer to get rid of it by throwing it into the yard of some other house.

Nevertheless he met with no mishap. The door of the porter's lodge was closed, though not locked; to all appearance, therefore, the porter was at home. But Raskolnikoff had so thoroughly lost all faculty of preparing any kind of plan, that he walked straight to the door and opened it. If the porter had asked him: "What do you want?" perhaps he would simply have handed him the hatchet. But, the same as on the previous occasion, the porter was absent, and this gave the young man every facility to replace the hatchet under the bench, exactly where he had found it. Then he went upstairs and reached his room without meeting a soul; the door of his landlady's apartments was shut. Once home again, he threw himself on his couch just as he was. He did not sleep, but lay in a sort of semiconsciousness. If anybody had then appeared before him, he would have sprung up and cried out. His head was swimming with a host of vague thoughts: do what he could, he was unable to follow the thread of one of them.

Raskolnikoff lay on the couch a very long while. At times he seemed to rouse from this half sleep, and then he noticed that the night was very far advanced, but still it never entered his head to rise. Soon it began to brighten into day, and the dawn found him in a state of stupefaction, lying motionless on his back. A desperate clamor, and sounds of brawls from the streets below, rose to his ears. These awakened him thoroughly, although he heard them every morning early at the same hour. "Ah! two o'clock, drinking is over," and he started up as though some one had pulled him off the couch. "What! two o'clock already?" He sat on the edge of the couch and then recollected everything, in an instant it all came back! At first he thought he was going out of his mind, a strange chill pervaded his frame, but the cold arose from the fever which had seized upon him during his sleep. He shivered until his teeth chattered, and all his limbs fairly shook. He went to the door, opened it, and listened; all was silent in the house. With astonishment he turned and looked round the room. How could he have come home the night before, not bolted the door, and thrown himself on the couch just as he was, not only not undressed, but with his hat on? There it lay in the middle of the floor where it had rolled. "If anyone came in, what would he think? That I am drunk, of course."

He went to the window—it was pretty light—and looked himself all over from head to foot, to see if there were any stains on his clothes. But he could not rely upon that sort of inspection; so, still shivering, he undressed and examined his clothes again, looking everywhere with the greatest care. To make quite sure, he went over them three times. He discovered nothing but a few drops of clotted blood on the ends of his trousers which were very much frayed. He took a big clasp-knife and cut off the frayed edges.

Suddenly he remembered that the purse and the things he had abstracted from the old woman's chest, were still in his pockets! He had never thought of taking them out and hiding them! indeed, it had never crossed his mind that they were in his pockets while examining his clothes! Was it possible? In a second he emptied all out on to the table in a heap. Then, turning his pockets inside out to make sure there was nothing left in them, he carried the things to a corner of the room. Just there, the paper was hanging loose from the wall; he bent down and commenced to stuff all the things into a hole behind the paper. "There, it's all out of sight!" thought he gleefully, as he stood gazing stupidly at the spot where the paper bulged out more than ever. Suddenly he began to shudder from terror. "Good heavens!" murmured he in despair, "what is the matter with me? Is that hidden? Is that the way to hide anything?"

Indeed, he had not reckoned on such spoil, he had only thought of taking the old woman's money; so he was not prepared with a hiding place for the jewels. "I have no cause to rejoice now," thought he. "Is that the way to hide anything? I must really be losing my senses!" He sunk on the couch again exhausted; another fit of intolerable shivering seized him, and he mechanically pulled his old student's cloak over him for warmth, as he fell into a delirious sleep. He lost all consciousness of himself. Not more than five minutes had elapsed before he woke up in intense excitement, and bent over his clothes in the deepest anguish. "How could I go to sleep again when nothing is done! For I have done nothing, the loop is still where I sewed it. I forgot all about that! What a convincing proof it would have been." He ripped it off and tore it into shreds which he placed among his underlinen under the pillow. "These rags cannot awaken any suspicions, I fancy; at least, so it seems to me," repeated he, standing up in the middle of the room, and, with an attempt rendered all the more painful by the effort it cost him, he looked all round, trying to make sure he had forgotten nothing. He suffered cruelly from this conviction, that everything, even memory, even the most elementary prudence, was abandoning him.

“Can this be the punishment already beginning? Indeed! indeed! it is!”

And indeed the frayed edges he had cut from the bottom of his trousers were lying on the floor, in the middle of the room, exposed to the view of the first comer. “But what can I be thinking of?” exclaimed he in utter bewilderment. Then a strange idea came into his head; he thought that perhaps all his clothes were saturated in blood, and that he could not see this because his senses were gone and his perception of things lost. Then he recollected that there would be traces on the purse, and his pockets would be wet with blood. It was so. “I am bereft of my reason, I know not what I am doing. Bah! not at all!—it is only weakness, delirium. I shall soon be better.” He tore at the lining. At this moment the rays of the morning streamed in and shone on his left boot. There were plain traces, and all the point was covered. “I must have stepped in that pool. What shall I do now? Boot, lining, rags, where shall they go?” He rolled them up and stood thinking in the middle of the room. “Ah, the stove. Yes, burn them. No, I cannot, I have no match. Better throw them away. Yes, yes, that is the thing,” said he, again sitting on the couch. “At once, and without delay too, quick.” But, instead, his head fell back upon the pillow, and chilly shiverings again came over him. He covered himself with his cloak and slept again. It appeared hours to him, and many a time in his sleep he tried to rise to hasten to throw away his bundle, but he could not, he seemed chained to the bed. At last he awoke, as he heard a loud knock at his door.

“Eh, open, will you?” cried Nastasia. “Don't lie there like a dog. It's eleven o'clock.”

“Perhaps he is not in,” said a man's voice.

“The porter's voice. What does he want?” Raskolnikoff rose, and sat on the couch listening. His heart throbbed violently.

"Who has bolted the door then?" exclaimed the servant. "Open, will you?"

"All must be discovered?" He rose a little and undid the bolt, and fell back again on his bed. There stood the porter and Nastasia. The servant looked strangely at Raskolnikoff, while he fixed a despairing glance upon the porter.

"Here is a notice for you from the office," said the latter.

"What office?"

"The police office."

"What for?"

"I don't know. You are summoned there, go." The porter looked anxiously at the lodger, and turned to leave. Raskolnikoff made no observation, and held the paper unopened in his hand.

"There, stay where you are," said Nastasia, seeing him fall back on the couch. "If you are ill, do not go. What is that in your hand?"

He looked down; in his right hand were clutched the pieces of frayed cloth, his boot, and the lining of his pocket. He had evidently fallen asleep with them as they were; indeed he recollected how, thinking deeply about them, he had dozed away.

"The idea of taking a lot of rags to bed and hugging them to you like a treasure!" laughed the servant in her sickly manner.

In a second he hid all under his coat and looked at her attentively. Although little was capable of passing in his mind, he felt she would not talk thus to a man under arrest for a crime. But then, the police?

"Is there anything you want? You stay here, I will bring it."

"No, I will go. I am going at once," murmured he, rising to his feet.

"Very well."

She went out after the porter. As soon as she had disappeared, he rushed to the light to look at his boot. Yes, there were spots, but not very plain, all covered with mud. But who would distinguish them? Nastasia could know nothing, thank heavens! Then with trembling hand he tore open the notice, and began to read. At last he understood; it was simply the usual notice to report himself at the office of the district that day at half-past nine o'clock.

"But why to-day?" cried he. "Lord, let it be over soon." He was about to fall down on his knees to pray, when a fit of laughter seized him. "I must trust to myself, not to prayers." He quickly dressed himself. "Shall I put the boot on?" he thought, "better throw it away, and hide all traces of it." Nevertheless he put it on, only, however, to throw it off again with an expression of horror. As, however, he recollected he had no other, a smile came to his face, and he drew it on once more. Again his face changed into deep despair, his limbs shook more and more. "This is not from exertion," thought he, "it is fear." His head spun round and round and his temples throbbed visibly.

On the stairs he recollected that all the things were in the hole in the wall, and then where was his certificate of birth? He stopped to think. But such despair, and, if it may be so called, cynicism, took hold of him, that he simply shook his head and went out. The sooner over, the better. Once again in the open air, he encountered the same insufferable heat, the dust, and the people in drink rolling about the streets. The sun caught him full in the eyes and almost blinded him, while his head spun round and round, as is usual in fever. On reaching the turning into the street he had taken the day before, he glanced in great agitation in the direction of the house, but immediately averted his eyes again. "If they ask me, I should confess, perhaps," said he to himself, as he turned away and made for the office. This was not far distant, in a new house, on the fourth floor. As he entered the court, he saw to the right of him a staircase, ascending which was a man carrying some books. "It was evidently there." He did not think of asking.

"I will go and fall on my knees and confess all," he murmured, and began to ascend the narrow and very steep stairs. On every floor the doors of the kitchens of the several apartments stood open to the staircase, and emitted a suffocating, sickening odor. The entrance to the office he was in search of was also wide open, and he walked in. A number of persons were waiting in the anteroom. The stench was simply intolerable, and was intensified by the smell of fresh paint. Pausing a little, he decided to advance farther into the small low room. He became impatient when he found no one took any notice of him. In an inner room were seated a number of clerks engaged in writing. He went up to one of these.

"What do you want?" Raskolnikoff showed him the notice.

"You are a student?" asked a clerk, glancing at the notice.

"Yes;—that is, I used to be."

The clerk glanced at him—without, however, any particular curiosity. He was a man with unkempt hair and an expressionless face.

"There is nothing to be learned from him, evidently," thought Raskolnikoff.

"Step in there to the head clerk," said the man, pointing to a farther room, which was quite full of people, among whom were two ladies.

The assistant district officer, a man adorned with red whiskers standing out on either side of his face, and with extremely small features, looked up impatiently at Raskolnikoff, whose filthy attire was by no means prepossessing. The latter returned his glance calmly and straight in the face, and in such a manner as to give the officer offense.

"What do you want here?" he cried, apparently surprised that such a ragged beggar was not knocked down by his thunder-bearing glance.

"I am here because I was summoned," stammered Raskolnikoff.

"It is for the recovery of money lent," said the head clerk. "Here!" and he threw a paper to Raskolnikoff, "Read!"

"Money? What money? It cannot be that," thought the young man, and he trembled with joy. Everything became clear, and the load fell off his shoulders.

"At what hour did you receive this, sir?" cried the lieutenant; "you were told to come at nine o'clock, and now it is nearly twelve!"

"I received it a quarter of an hour ago," loudly replied Raskolnikoff, over his shoulder, suddenly angered, "and it is sufficient to say that I am ill with a fever."

"Please not to bawl!"

"I did not bawl, but spoke plainly; it is you that bawl. I am a student, and am not going to have you speak to me in that fashion."

The officer became enraged, and fumed so that only splutters flew out of his mouth. He jumped up from his place. "Please keep silence. You are in court. Don't be insolent."

"And so are you in court; and, besides bawling, you are smoking, so you are wanting in politeness to the whole company." As he said this, Raskolnikoff felt an inexpressible delight at his maliciousness. The clerk looked up with a smile. The choleric officer was clearly nonplused.

"That is not your business, sir," he cried at last, unnaturally loud. "Make the necessary declaration. Show him, Alexander Gregorivitch. Complaints have been made about you! You don't pay your debts! You know how to fly the kite evidently!"

Raskolnikoff did not listen, but greedily seized the paper. He read it through more than once, and could make nothing of it. "What is this?" he asked of the clerk.

"It is a writ for recovery on a note of hand of yours. Please write," said the clerk.

"Write what?" asked he rudely.

"As I dictate."

The clerk stood near and dictated to him the usual form of declaration: that he was unable to pay, that he would not quit the capital, dispose of his goods in any way, etc., etc.

"You cannot write, your pen is falling from your fingers," said the clerk, and he looked him in the face. "Are you ill?"

"Yes, my head swims. Go on."

"That is all. Now sign it."

Raskolnikoff let fall the pen, and seemed as if about to rise and go; but, instead of doing so, he laid both elbows on the table and supported his head with his hands. A new idea formed in his mind: to rise immediately, go straight to Nicodemus Thomich the ward officer and tell him all that had occurred; then to accompany him to his room, and show him all the things hidden away in the wall behind the paper. His desire to do all this was of such strength that he got up from the table to carry his design into execution. "Reflect, reflect a moment!" ran in his head. "No, better not think, get it off my shoulders." Suddenly he stood still as if shot. Nicodemus Thomich was at this moment hotly discussing something with Elia Petrovitch, the inspector of police, and the words caught Raskolnikoff's anxious attention. He listened.

"It cannot be, they will both be released. In the first place, all is contradictory. Consider. Why did they call the porter if it were their work? To denounce themselves? Or out of cunning? Not at all, that would be too much! Besides, did not the porter see the student Pestriakoff at the very gate just as he came in, and he stood there some time with three friends who had accompanied him. And Koch: was he not below in the silversmith's for half an hour before he went up to the old woman's? Now, consider."

"But see what contradictions arise! They say they knocked and found the door closed; yet three minutes after, when they went back with the porter, it was open."

"That's true. The murderer was inside, and had bolted the door, and certainly he would have been captured had not Koch foolishly run off to the porter. In the interval *he*, no doubt, had time to escape downstairs. Koch explains that, if he had remained, the man would have leaped out and killed him. He wanted to have a *Te Deum* sung. Ha, ha!"

"Did nobody see the murderer?"

"How could they? The house is a perfect Noah's ark," put in the clerk, who had been listening.

"The thing is clear, very clear," said Nicodemus Thomich decisively.

"Not at all! Not at all!" cried Elia Petrovitch, in reply.

Raskolnikoff took up his hat and made for the door, but he never reached it. When he came to himself he found he was sitting on a chair, supported on the right by some unknown man, while to his left stood another, holding some yellow water in a yellow glass. Nicodemus Thomich, standing before him, was looking at him fixedly. Raskolnikoff rose.

"What is it? Are you ill?" asked the officer sharply.

"He could hardly hold the pen to sign his name," the clerk explained, at the same time going back to his books.

"Have you been ill very long?" cried Elia Petrovitch from his table; he had run to see the swoon and returned to his place.

"Since yesterday," murmured Raskolnikoff in reply.

"You went out yesterday?"

"I did."

"Ill?"

"Ill!"

"At what time?"

"Eight o'clock in the evening."

"Where did you go, allow me to ask?"

"In the streets."

"Concise and clear."

Raskolnikoff had replied sharply, in a broken voice, his face as pale as a handkerchief, and with his black swollen eyes averted from Elia Petrovitch's scrutinizing glance.

"He can hardly stand on his legs. Do you want to ask anything more?" said Nicodemus Thomich.

"Nothing," replied Elia Petrovitch.

Nicodemus Thomich evidently wished to say more, but, turning to the clerk, who in turn glanced expressively at him, the latter became silent, all suddenly stopped speaking. It was strange.

Raskolnikoff went out. As he descended the stairs he could hear an animated discussion had broken out, and above all, the interrogative voice of Nicodemus Thomich. In the street he came to himself.

"Search, search! they are going to search!" he cried. "The scoundrels, they suspect me!" The old dread seized him again, from head to foot.

Here was the room. All was quiet, and no one had, apparently, disturbed it—not even Nastasia. But, heavens! how could he have left all those things where they were? He rushed to the corner, pushed his hands behind the paper, took out the things, and thrust them in his pockets. There were eight articles in all: two little boxes with earrings or something of that description, then four little morocco cases; a chain wrapped up in paper, and something else done up in a common piece of newspaper—possibly a decoration. Raskolnikoff distributed these, together with the purse, about his person, in order to make them less noticeable, and quitted the room again. All the time he had left the door wide open. He went away hurriedly, fearing pursuit. Perhaps in a few minutes orders would be issued to hunt him down, so he must hide all traces of his theft at once; and he would do so while he had strength and reason left him. But where should he go?

This had been long decided. Throw the lot in the canal and the matter would be at an end! So he had resolved in that night of delirium, when he cried out, "Quick, quick! throw all away!" But this was not so easy. He wandered to the quays of the Catherine Canal, and lingered there for half an hour. Here a washing raft lay where he had thought of sinking his spoil, or there boats were moored, and everywhere people swarmed. Then, again, would the cases sink? Would they not rather float? No, this would not do. He would go to the Neva; there would be fewer people there and more room, and it would be more convenient. He recognized that he had been wandering about for fully half an hour, and in dangerous places. He must make haste. He made his way to the river, but soon came to another standstill. Why in the Neva? Why in the water at all? Better some solitary place in a wood, or under some bushes. Dig a hole and bury them! He felt he was not in a condition to deliberate clearly and soundly, but this idea appeared the best.

This idea also, however, was not destined to be realized, and another took its place. As he passed the V—— Prospect, he suddenly noticed on the left an entrance into a court, which was surrounded entirely by high walls. On the right, a long way up the court, rose the side of a huge four-storied building. To the left, parallel with the walls of the house, and commencing immediately at the gate, there ran a wooden hoarding of about twenty paces down the court. Then came a space where a lot of rubbish was deposited; while farther down, at the bottom of the court, was a shed, apparently part of some workshop, possibly that of a carpenter or coach builder. Everything appeared as black as coal dust. Here was the very place, he thought; and, after looking round, went up the court. Behind the door he espied a large unworked stone, weighing about fifty pounds, which lay close up against the hoarding. No one could see him where he stood; he was entirely free from observation. He bent down to the stone, managed to turn it over after considerable effort, and found underneath a small cavity. He threw in the cases, and then the purse on the top of all. The stone was not perceptibly higher when he had replaced it, and little traces of its having been moved could be noticed. So he pressed some earth against the edges with his foot, and made off.

He laughed for joy when again in the street. All traces were gone, and who would think of looking there? And if they were found who would suspect him? All proofs were gone, and he laughed again. Yes, he recollected afterwards how he laughed—a long, nervous, lingering laugh, lasting all the time he was in that street.

He reached home toward evening, perhaps at about eight o'clock—how, and by what particular way he never recollected—but, speedily undressing, he lay down on the couch, trembling like a beaten horse, and, drawing his overcoat over him, he fell immediately into a deep sleep. He awoke in a high fever and delirious. Some days later he came to himself, rose and went out. It was eight o'clock, and the sun had disappeared. The heat was as intolerable as before, but he inhaled the dusty, fetid, infected town air with greediness. And now his head began to spin round, and a wild expression of energy crept into his inflamed eyes and pale, meager, wan face. He did not know, did not even think, what he was going to do; he only knew that all was to be finished "to-day," at one blow, immediately, or he would never return home, because he had no desire to live thus. How to finish? By what means? No matter how, and he did not want to think. He drove away any thoughts which disturbed him, and only clung to the necessity of ending all, "no matter how," said he, with desperate self-confidence and decision. By force of habit he took his old walk, and set out in the direction of the Haymarket. Farther on, he came on a young man who was grinding some very feeling ballads upon a barrel organ. Near the man, on the footpath, was a young girl of about fifteen years of age, fashionably dressed, with crinoline, mantle, and gloves, and a straw hat trimmed with gaudy feathers, but all old and terribly worn out, who, in a loud and cracked though not altogether unpleasing voice, was singing before a shop in expectation of a couple of kopecks. Raskolnikoff stopped and joined one or two listeners, took out a five-kopeck piece, and gave it to the girl. The latter at once stopped on a very high note which she had just reached, and cried to the man, "Come along," and both immediately moved on to another place.

"Do you like street music?" said Raskolnikoff to a middle-aged man standing near him. The latter looked at him in surprise, but smiled. "I love it," continued Raskolnikoff, "especially when they sing to the organ on a cold, dark, gray winter's evening, when all the passers-by seem to have pale, green, sickly-looking faces—when the snow is falling like a sleet, straight down and with no wind, you know, and while the lamps shine on it all."

"I don't know. Excuse me," said the man, frightened at the question and Raskolnikoff's strange appearance, and hastily withdrawing to the other side of the street.

Raskolnikoff went on, and came to the place in the Haymarket where he had met the trader and his wife and Elizabeth. No one was there at the moment. He stopped, and turned to a young fellow, in a red shirt, who was gaping at the entrance to a flour shop.

"A man trades here at this corner, with his wife, eh?"

"Everyone trades here," replied the lad, scanning his questioner from head to foot.

"What is he called?"

"What he was christened."

"But you belong to Zaraisk, don't you? To what Government?"

The boy stared at Raskolnikoff. "We have no governor, your highness, but districts. I stay at home, and know nothing about it, but my brother does; so pardon me, your most mighty highness."

"Is that an eating house there?"

"That's a dram shop; they have a billiard table."

"There are newspapers here?" asked he, as he entered a room—one of a suite—rather empty. Two or three persons sat with tea before them, while in a farther room a group of men were seated, drinking champagne. Raskolnikoff thought he recognized Zametoff among them, but he could not be sure. "Never mind, if it is!" he muttered.

"Brandy, sir?" asked the waiter.

"No, tea; and bring me some newspapers—for about the last five days. I'll give you a drink."

The papers and the tea appeared. Raskolnikoff sat and searched, and, at last, found what he wanted. "Ah, here it is!" he cried, as he began to read. The words danced before his eyes, but he read greedily to the end, and turned to others for later intelligence. His hands trembled with impatience, and the sheets shook again. Suddenly some one sat down near him. He looked up, and there was Zametoff—that same Zametoff, with his rings and chain, his oiled locks and fancy waistcoat and unclean linen. He seemed pleased, and his tanned face, a little inflamed by the champagne, wore a smile.

"Ah! you here?" he commenced, in a tone as if he had known Raskolnikoff for an age. "Why Razoumikhin told me yesterday that you were lying unconscious. How strange! Then I was at your place——"

Raskolnikoff laid down the paper and turned to Zametoff. On his lips was a slight provoking smile. "I know you were," he replied, "I heard so. You searched for my boot. To what agreeable places you resort. Who gives you champagne to drink?"

"We were drinking together. What do you mean?"

"Nothing, dear boy, nothing," said Raskolnikoff, with a smile and slapping Zametoff on the shoulders. "I am not in earnest, but simply in fun, as your workman said, when he wrestled with Dmitri, you know, in that murder case."

"Do you know about that?"

"Yes, and perhaps more than you do."

"You are very peculiar. It is a pity you came out. You are ill."

"Do I seem strange?"

"Yes; what are you reading?"

"The paper."

"There are a number of fires."

"I am not reading about them." He looked curiously at Zametoff, and a malicious smile distorted his lips. "No, fires are not in my line," he added, winking at Zametoff. "Now, I should like to know, sweet youth, what it signifies to you what I read?"

"Nothing at all. I only asked. Perhaps I——"

"Listen. You are a cultivated man—a literary man, are you not?"

"I was in the sixth class at college," Zametoff answered, with a certain amount of dignity.

"The sixth! Oh, my fine fellow! With rings and a chain—a rich man! You are a dear boy," and Raskolnikoff gave a short, nervous laugh, right in the face of Zametoff. The latter was very much taken aback, and, if not offended, seemed a good deal surprised.

"How strange you are!" said Zametoff seriously. "You have the fever still on you; you are raving!"

"Am I, my fine fellow—am I strange? Yes, but I am very interesting to you, am I not?"

"Interesting?"

"Yes. You ask me what I am reading, what I am looking for; then I am looking through a number of papers. Suspicious, isn't it? Well, I will explain to you, or rather confess—no, not that exactly. I will give testimony, and you shall take it down—that's it. So then, I swear that I was reading, and came here on purpose"—Raskolnikoff blinked his eyes and paused—"to read an account of the murder of the old woman." He finished almost in a whisper, eagerly watching Zametoff's face. The latter returned his glances without flinching. And it appeared strange to Zametoff that a full minute seemed to pass as they kept fixedly staring at each other in this manner.

"Oh, so that's what you have been reading?" Zametoff at last cried impatiently. "What is there in that?"

"She is the same woman," continued Raskolnikoff, still in a whisper, and taking no notice of Zametoff's remark, "the very same woman you were talking about when I swooned in your office. You recollect—you surely recollect?"

"Recollect what?" said Zametoff, almost alarmed.

The serious expression on Raskolnikoff's face altered in an instant, and he again commenced his nervous laugh, and laughed as if he were quite unable to contain himself. There had recurred to his mind, with fearful clearness, the moment when he stood at the door with the hatchet in his hand. There he was, holding the bolt, and they were tugging and thumping away at the door. Oh, how he itched to shriek at them, open the door, thrust out his tongue at them, and frighten them away, and then laugh, "Ah, ah, ah, ah!"

"You are insane, or else—" said Zametoff, and then paused as if a new thought had suddenly struck him.

"Or what, or what? Now what? Tell me!"

"Nonsense!" said Zametoff to himself, "it can't be." Both became silent. After this unexpected and fitful outburst of laughter, Raskolnikoff had become lost in thought and looked very sad. He leaned on the table with his elbows, buried his head in his hands, and seemed to have quite forgotten Zametoff. The silence continued a long time. "You do not drink your tea; it is getting cold," said the latter, at last.

"What? Tea? Yes!" Raskolnikoff snatched at his glass, put a piece of bread in his mouth, and then, after looking at Zametoff, seemingly recollected and roused himself. His face at once resumed its previous smile, and he continued to sip his tea.

"What a number of rogues there are about," Zametoff said. "I read not long ago, in the Moscow papers, that they had captured a whole gang of forgers in that city. Quite a colony."

"That's old news. I read it a month ago," replied Raskolnikoff in a careless manner. "And you call such as these rogues?" he added, smiling.

"Why not?"

"Rogues indeed! Why, they are only children and babies. Fifty banded together for such purposes! Is it possible? Three would be quite sufficient, and then they should be sure of one another—not babble over their cups. The babies! Then to hire unreliable people to change the notes at the money changers', persons whose hands tremble as they receive the rubles. On such their lives depend! Far better to strangle yourself! The man goes in, receives the change, counts some over, the last portion he takes on faith, stuffs all in his pocket, rushes away and the murder is out. All is lost by one foolish man. Is it not ridiculous?"

"That his hands should shake?" replied Zametoff. "No; that is quite likely. Yours would not, I suppose? I could not endure it, though. For a paltry reward of a hundred rubles to go on such a mission! And where? Into a banker's office with forged notes! I should certainly lose my head. Would not you?"

Raskolnikoff felt again a strong impulse to make a face at him. A shiver ran down his back. "You would not catch me acting so foolishly," he commenced. "This is how I should do. I should count over the first thousand very carefully, perhaps four times, right to the end, carefully examine each note, and then only pass to the second thousand, count these as far as the middle of the bundle, take out a note, hold it to the light, turn it over, then hold it to the light again, and say, 'I fear this is a bad note,' and then begin to relate some story about a lost note. Then there would be a third thousand to count. Not yet, please, there is a mistake in the second thousand. No, it is correct. And so I should proceed until I had received all. At last I should turn to go, open the door, but, no, pardon me! I should return, ask some question, receive some explanation, and there it is all done."

"What funny things you do say!" said Zametoff with a smile. "You are all very well theoretically, but try it and see. Look, for example, at the murder of the money lender, a case in point. There was a desperate villain who in broad daylight stopped at nothing, and yet his hand shook, did it not?—and he could not finish, and left all the spoil behind him. The deed evidently robbed him of his presence of mind."

This language nettled Raskolnikoff. "You think so? Then lay your hand upon him," said he, maliciously delighted to tease him.

"Never fear but we shall!"

"You? Go to, you know nothing about it. All you think of inquiring is whether a man is flinging money about; he is—then, *ergo* he is guilty."

"That is exactly what they do," replied Zametoff, "they murder, risk their lives, and then rush to the public house and are caught. Their lavishness betrays them. You see they are not all so crafty as you are. You would not run there, I suppose?" '

Raskolnikoff frowned and looked steadily at Zametoff. "You seem anxious to know how I should act," he said with some displeasure.

"I should very much like to know," replied Zametoff in a serious tone. He seemed, indeed, very anxious.

"Very much?"

"Very much."

"Good. This would be my plan," Raskolnikoff said, as he again bent near to the face of his listener, and speaking in such a tragic whisper as almost to make the latter shudder. "I should take the money and all I could find, and make off, going, however, in no particular direction, but on and on until I came to some obscure and inclosed place, where no one was about—a market garden, or any such-like spot. I should then look about me for a stone, perhaps a pound and a half in weight, lying, it may be, in a corner against a partition, say a stone used for building purposes; this I should lift up and under it there would be a hole. In that hole I should deposit all the things I had got, roll back the stone, stamp it down with my feet, and be off. For a year I should let them lie—for two years, three years. Now then, search for them! Where are they?"

"You are indeed mad," said Zametoff, also in a low tone, but turning away from Raskolnikoff. The latter's eyes glistened, he became paler than ever, while his upper lip trembled violently. He placed his face closer, if possible, to that of Zametoff, his lips moving as if he wished to speak, but no words escaped them—several moments elapsed—Raskolnikoff knew what he was doing, but felt utterly unable to control himself, that strange impulse was upon him as when he stood at the bolted door, to come forth and let all be known.

"What if I killed the old woman and Elizabeth?" he asked suddenly, and then—came to himself.

Zametoff turned quite pale; then his face changed to a smile. "Can it be so?" he muttered to himself.

Raskolnikoff eyed him savagely. "Speak out. What do you think? Yes? Is it so?"

"Of course not. I believe it now less than ever," replied Zametoff hastily.

"Caught at last! caught, my fine fellow! What people believe less than ever, they must have believed once, eh?"

"Not at all. You frightened me into the supposition," said Zametoff, visibly confused.

"So you do not think this? Then why those questions in the office? Why did the lieutenant question me after my swoon? Waiter," he cried, seizing his cap, "here, how much?"

"Thirty kopecks, sir," replied the man.

"There you are, and twenty for yourself. Look, what a lot of money!" turning to Zametoff and thrusting forth his shaking hand filled with the twenty-five rubles, red and blue notes. "Whence comes all this? Where did I obtain these new clothes from? You know I had none. You have asked the landlady, I suppose? Well, no matter!—Enough! Adieu, most affectionately."

He went out, shaking from some savage hysterical emotion, a mixture of delight, gloom, and weariness. His face was drawn as if he had just recovered from a fit; and, as his agitation of mind increased, so did his weakness.

Meanwhile, Zametoff remained in the restaurant where Raskolnikoff had left him, deeply buried in thought, considering the different points Raskolnikoff had placed before him.

His heart was empty and depressed, and he strove again to drive off thought. No feeling of anguish came, neither was there any trace of that fierce energy which moved him when he left the house to "put an end to it all."

"What will be the end of it? The result lies in my own will. What kind of end? Ah, we are all alike, and accept the bit of ground for our feet and live. Must this be the end? Shall I say the word or not? Oh, how weary I feel! Oh, to lie down or sit anywhere! How foolish it is to strive against my illness! Bah! What thoughts run through my brain!" Thus he meditated as he went drowsily along the banks of the canal, until, turning to the right and then to the left, he reached the office building. He stopped short, however, and, turning down a lane, went on past two other streets, with no fixed purpose, simply, no doubt, to give himself a few moments longer for reflection. He went on, his eyes fixed on the ground, until all of a sudden he started, as if some one had whispered in his ear. Raising his eyes he saw that he stood before *the house*, at its very gates.

Quick as lightning, an idea rushed into his head, and he marched through the yard and made his way up the well-known staircase to the fourth story. It was, as usual, very dark, and as he reached each landing he peered almost with caution. There was the room newly painted, where Dmitri and Mikola had worked. He reached the fourth landing and he paused before the murdered woman's room in doubt. The door was wide open and he could hear voices within; this he had not anticipated. However, after wavering a little, he went straight in. The room was being done up, and in it were some workmen. This astonished him—indeed, it would seem he had expected to find everything as he had left it, even to the dead bodies lying on the floor. But to see the place with bare walls and bereft of furniture was very strange! He walked up to the windows and sat on the sill. One of the workmen now saw him and cried:

"What do you want here?"

Instead of replying, Raskolnikoff walked to the outer door and, standing outside, began to pull at the bell. Yes, that was the bell, with its harsh sound. He pulled again and again three times, and remained there listening and thinking.

"What is it you want?" again cried the workman as he went out to Raskolnikoff.

"I wish to hire some rooms. I came to look at these."

"People don't take lodgings in the night. Why don't you apply to the porter?"

"The floor has been washed. Are you going to paint it?" remarked Raskolnikoff. "Where is the blood?"

"What blood?"

"The old woman's and her sister's. There was quite a pool."

"Who are you?" cried the workman uneasily.

"I am Rodion Romanovitch Raskolnikoff, ex-student. I live at the house Schilla, in a lane not far from here, No. 14. Ask the porter there—he knows me," Raskolnikoff replied indifferently, without turning to his questioner.

"What were you doing in those rooms?"

"Looking at them."

"What for? Come, out you go then, if you won't explain yourself," suddenly shouted the porter, a huge fellow in a smock frock, with a large bunch of keys round his waist; and he caught Raskolnikoff by the shoulder and pitched him into the street. The latter lurched forward, but recovered himself, and, giving one look at the spectators, went quietly away.

"What shall I do now?" thought Raskolnikoff. He was standing on the bridge, near a crossing, and was looking around him as if expecting some one to speak. But no one spoke, and all was dark and dull, and dead—at least to him, and him alone.

A few days later, Raskolnikoff heard from his friend Razoumikhin that those who had borrowed money from Alena Ivanovna were going to the police office to redeem their pledges. He went with Razoumikhin to the office where they were received by Porphyrius Petrovitch, the examining magistrate, who seemed to have expected them.

"You have been expecting this visit? But how did you know that he had pledged anything with Alena Ivanovna?" cried Razoumikhin.

Porphyrius Petrovitch, without any further reply, said to Raskolnikoff: "Your things, a ring and a watch, were at her place, wrapped up in a piece of paper, and on this paper your name was legibly written in pencil, with the date of the day she had received these things from you."

"What a memory you must have got!" said Raskolnikoff, with a forced smile, doing his best to look the magistrate unflinchingly in the face. However, he could not help adding: "I say so, because, as the owners of the pledged articles are no doubt very numerous, you must, I should fancy, have some difficulty in remembering them all; but I see, on the contrary, that you do nothing of the kind. (Oh! fool! why add that?)"

"But they have nearly all of them come here; you alone had not done so," answered Porphyrius, with an almost imperceptible sneer.

"I happened to be rather unwell."

"So I heard. I have been told that you have been in great pain. Even now you are pale."

"Not at all. I am not pale. On the contrary, I am very well!" answered Raskolnikoff in a tone of voice which had all at once become brutal and violent. He felt rising within him uncontrollable anger. "Anger will make me say some foolish thing," he thought. "But why do they exasperate me?"

"He was rather unwell! A pretty expression, to be sure!" exclaimed Razoumikhin. "The fact is that up to yesterday he has been almost unconscious. Would you believe it, Porphyrius? Yesterday, when he could hardly stand upright, he seized the moment when we had just left him, to dress, to be off by stealth, and to go loafing about, Heaven only knows where, till midnight, being, all the time, in a completely raving condition. Can you imagine such a thing? It is a most remarkable case!"

"Indeed! In a completely raving state?" remarked Porphyrius, with the toss of the head peculiar to Russian rustics.

"Absurd! Don't you believe a word of it! Besides, I need not urge you to that effect—of course you are convinced," observed Raskolnikoff, beside himself with passion. But Porphyrius Petrovitch did not seem to hear these singular words.

"How could you have gone out if you had not been delirious?" asked Razoumikhin, getting angry in his turn. "Why have gone out at all? What was the object of it? And, above all, to go in that secret manner? Come, now, make a clean breast of it—you know you were out of your mind, were you not? Now that danger is gone by, I tell you so to your face."

"I had been very much annoyed yesterday," said Raskolnikoff, addressing the magistrate, with more or less of insolence in his smile, "and, wishing to get rid of them, I went out to hire lodgings where I could be sure of privacy, to effect which I had taken a certain amount of money. Mr. Zametoff saw what I had by me, and perhaps he can say whether I was in my right senses yesterday or whether I was delirious? Perhaps he will judge as to our quarrel." Nothing would have pleased him better than there and then to have strangled that gentleman, whose taciturnity and equivocal facial expression irritated him.

"In my opinion, you were talking very sensibly and even with considerable shrewdness; only I thought you too irritable," observed Zametoff off-handedly.

"Do let us have some tea! We are as dry as fishes!" exclaimed Razoumikhin.

"Good idea! But perhaps you would like something more substantial before tea, would you?"

"Look alive, then!"

Porphyrius Petrovitch went out to order tea. All kinds of thoughts were at work in Raskolnikoff's brain. He was excited. "They don't even take pains to dissemble; they certainly don't mince matters as far as I am concerned: that is something, at all events! Since Porphyrius knew next to nothing about me, why on earth should he have spoken with Nicodemus Thomich Zametoff at all? They even scorn to deny that they are on my track, almost like a pack of hounds! They certainly speak out plainly enough!" he said, trembling with rage. "Well, do so, as bluntly as you like, but don't play with me as the cat would with the mouse! That's not quite civil, Porphyrius Petrovitch; I won't quite allow that yet! I'll make a stand and tell you some plain truths to your faces, and then you shall find out my real opinion about you!" He had some difficulty in breathing. "But supposing that all this is pure fancy?—a kind of mirage? Suppose I had misunderstood? Let me try and keep up my nasty part, and not commit myself, like the fool, by blind anger! Ought I to give them credit for intentions they have not? Their words are, in themselves, not very extraordinary ones—so much must be allowed; but a double meaning may lurk beneath them. Why did Porphyrius, in speaking of the old woman, simply say 'At her place?' Why did Zametoff observe that I had spoken very sensibly? Why their peculiar manner?—yes, it is this manner of theirs. How is it possible that all this cannot have struck Razoumikhin? The booby never notices anything! But I seem to be feverish again! Did Porphyrius give me a kind of wink just now, or was I deceived in some way? The idea is absurd! Why should he wink at me? Perhaps they intend to upset my nervous organization, and, by so doing, drive me to extremes! Either the whole thing is a phantasmagoria, or—they know!"

These thoughts flashed through his mind with the rapidity of lightning. Porphyrius Petrovitch came back a moment afterwards. He seemed in a very good temper. "When I left your place yesterday, old fellow, I was really not well," he commenced, addressing Razoumikhin with a cheeriness which was only just becoming apparent, "but that is all gone now."

"Did you find the evening a pleasant one? I left you in the thick of the fun; who came off best?"

"Nobody, of course. They caviled to their heart's content over their old arguments."

"Fancy, Rodia, the discussion last evening turned on the question: 'Does crime exist? Yes, or No.' And the nonsense they talked on the subject!"

"What is there extraordinary in the query? It is the social question without the charm of novelty," answered Raskolnikoff abruptly.

"Talking of crime," said Porphyrius Petrovitch, speaking to Raskolnikoff, "I remember a production of yours which greatly interested me. I am speaking about your article *on crime*. I don't very well remember the title. I was delighted in reading it two months ago in the *Periodical Word*."

"But how do you know the article was mine? I only signed it with an initial."

"I discovered it lately, quite by chance. The chief editor is a friend of mine; it was he who let out the secret of your authorship. The article has greatly interested me."

"I was analyzing, if I remember rightly, the psychological condition of a criminal at the moment of his deed."

"Yes, and you strove to prove that a criminal, at such a moment, is always, mentally, more or less unhinged. That point of view is a very original one, but it was not this part of your article which most interested me. I was particularly struck by an idea at the end of the article, and which, unfortunately, you have touched upon too cursorily. In a word, if you remember, you maintained that there are men in existence who can, or more accurately, who have an absolute right to commit all kinds of wicked and criminal acts—men for whom, to a certain extent, laws do not exist."

"Is it not very likely that some coming Napoleon did for Alena Ivanovna last week?" suddenly blustered Zametoff from his corner.

Without saying a word, Raskolnikoff fixed on Porphyrius a firm and penetrating glance. Raskolnikoff was beginning to look sullen. He seemed to have been suspecting something for some time past. He looked round him with an irritable air. For a moment there was an ominous silence. Raskolnikoff was getting ready to go.

"What, are you off already?" asked Porphyrius, kindly offering the young man his hand with extreme affability. "I am delighted to have made your acquaintance. And as for your application, don't be uneasy about it. Write in the way I suggested. Or, perhaps, you had better do this. Come and see me before long—to-morrow, if you like. I shall be here without fail at eleven o'clock. We can make everything right—we'll have a chat—and as you were one of the last that went *there*, you might be able to give some further particulars?" he added, with his friendly smile.

"Do you wish to examine me formally?" Raskolnikoff inquired, in an uncomfortable tone.

"Why should I? Such a thing is out of the question. You have misunderstood me. I ought to tell you that I manage to make the most of every opportunity. I have already had a chat with every single person that has been in the habit of pledging things with the old woman—several have given me very useful information—and as you happen to be the last one— By the by," he exclaimed, with sudden pleasure, "how lucky I am thinking about it, I was really going to forget it!" (Saying which he turned to Razoumikhin.) "You were almost stunning my ears, the other day, talking about Mikolka. Well, I am certain, quite certain, as to his innocence," he went on, once more addressing himself to Raskolnikoff. "But what was to be done? It has been necessary to disturb Dmitri. Now, what I wanted to ask was: On going upstairs—was it not between seven and eight you entered the house?"

"Yes," replied Raskolnikoff, and he immediately regretted an answer he ought to have avoided.

"Well, in going upstairs, between seven and eight, did you not see on the second floor, in one of the rooms, when the door was wide open—you remember, I dare say?—did you not see two painters, or, at all events, one of the two? They were whitewashing the room, I believe; you must have seen them! The matter is of the utmost importance to them!"

"Painters, you say? I saw none," replied Raskolnikoff slowly, trying to sound his memory: for a moment he violently strained it to discover, as quickly as he could, the trap concealed by the magistrate's question. "No, I did not see a single one; I did not even see any room standing open," he went on, delighted at having discovered the trap, "but on the fourth floor I remember noticing that the man lodging on the same landing as Alena Ivanovna was in the act of moving. I remember that very well, as I met a few soldiers carrying a sofa, and I was obliged to back against the wall; but, as for painters, I don't remember seeing a single one—I don't even remember a room that had its door open. No, I saw nothing."

"But what are you talking about?" all at once exclaimed Razoumikhin, who, till that moment, had attentively listened; "it was on the very day of the murder that painters were busy in that room, while he came there two days previously! Why are you asking that question?"

"Right! I have confused the dates!" cried Porphyrius, tapping his forehead. "Deuce take me! That job makes me lose my head!" he added by way of excuse, and speaking to Raskolnikoff. "It is very important that we should know if anybody saw them in that room between seven and eight. I thought I might have got that information from you without thinking any more about it. I had positively confused the days!"

"You ought to be more attentive!" grumbled Razoumikhin.

These last words were uttered in the anteroom, as Porphyrius very civilly led his visitors to the door. They were gloomy and morose on leaving the house, and had gone some distance before speaking. Raskolnikoff breathed like a man who had just been subjected to a severe trial.

When, on the following day, precisely at eleven o'clock, Raskolnikoff called on the examining magistrate, he was astonished to have to dance attendance for a considerable time. According to his idea, he ought to have been admitted immediately; ten minutes, however, elapsed before he could see Porphyrius Petrovitch. In the outer room where he had been waiting, people came and went without heeding him in the least. In the next room, which was a kind of office, a few clerks were at work, and it was evident that not one of them had even an idea who Raskolnikoff might be. The young man cast a mistrustful look about him. "Was there not," thought he, "some spy, some mysterious myrmidon of the law, ordered to watch him, and, if necessary, to prevent his escape?" But he noticed nothing of the kind; the clerks were all hard at work, and the other people paid him no kind of attention. The visitor began to become reassured. "If," thought he, "this mysterious personage of yesterday, this specter which had risen from the bowels of the earth, knew all, and had seen all, would they, I should like to know, let me stand about like this? Would they not rather have arrested me, instead of waiting till I should come of my own accord? Hence this man has either made no kind of revelation as yet about me, or, more probably, he knows nothing, and has seen nothing (besides how could he have seen anything?): consequently I have misjudged, and all that happend yesterday was nothing but an illusion of my diseased imagination." This explanation, which had offered itself the day before to his mind, at the time he felt most fearful, he considered a more likely one.

Whilst thinking about all this and getting ready for a new struggle, Raskolnikoff suddenly perceived that he was trembling; he became indignant at the very thought that it was fear of an interview with the hateful Porphyrius Petrovitch which led him to do so. The most terrible thing to him was to find himself once again in presence of this man. He hated him beyond all expression, and what he dreaded was lest he might show this hatred. His indignation was so great that it suddenly stopped this trembling; he therefore prepared himself to enter with a calm and self-possessed air, promised himself to speak as little as possible, to be very carefully on the watch in order to check, above all things, his irascible disposition. In the midst of these reflections, he was introduced to Porphyrius Petrovitch. The latter was alone in his office, a room of medium dimensions, containing a large table, facing a sofa covered with shiny leather, a bureau, a cupboard standing in a corner, and a few chairs: all this furniture, provided by the State, was of yellow wood. In the wall, or rather in the wainscoting of the other end, there was a closed door, which led one to think that there were other rooms behind it. As soon as Porphyrius Petrovitch had seen Raskolnikoff enter his office, he went to close the door which had given him admission, and both stood facing one another. The magistrate received his visitor to all appearances in a pleasant and affable manner, and it was only at the expiration of a few moments that the latter observed the magistrate's somewhat embarrassed manner—he seemed to have been disturbed in a more or less clandestine occupation.

"Good! my respectable friend! Here you are then—in our latitudes!" commenced Porphyrius, holding out both hands. "Pray, be seated, *batuchka!* But, perhaps, you don't like being called respectable? Therefore, *batuchka,* for short! Pray, don't think me familiar. Sit down here on the sofa."

Raskolnikoff did so without taking his eyes off the judge. "These words 'in our latitudes,' these excuses for his familiarity, this expression 'for short,' what could be the meaning of all this? He held out his hands to me without shaking mine, withdrawing them before I could do so," thought Raskolnikoff mistrustfully. Both watched each other, but no sooner did their eyes meet than they both turned them aside with the rapidity of a flash of lightning.

"I have called with this paper—about the—— If you please. Is it correct, or must another form be drawn up?"

"What, what paper? Oh, yes! Do not put yourself out. It is perfectly correct," answered Porphyrius somewhat hurriedly, before he had even examined it; then, after having cast a glance on it, he said, speaking very rapidly: "Quite right, that is all that is required," and placed the sheet on the table. A moment later he locked it up in his bureau, chattering about other things.

"Yesterday," observed Raskolnikoff, "you had, I fancy, a wish to examine me formally—with reference to my dealings with—the victim? At least so it seemed to me!"

"Why did I say, 'So it seemed?'" reflected the young man all of a sudden. "After all, what can be the harm of it? Why should I distress myself about that!" he added, mentally, a moment afterwards. The very fact of his proximity to Porphyrius, with whom he had scarcely as yet interchanged a word, had immeasurably increased his mistrust; he marked this in a moment, and concluded that such a mood was an exceedingly dangerous one, inasmuch as his agitation, his nervous irritation, would only increase. "That is bad! very bad! I shall be saying something thoughtless!"

"Quite right. But do not put yourself out of the way, there is time, plenty of time," murmured Petrovitch, who, without apparent design, kept going to and fro, now approaching the window, now his bureau, to return a moment afterwards to the table. At times he would avoid Raskolnikoff's suspicious look, at times again he drew up sharp whilst looking his visitor straight in the face. The sight of this short chubby man, whose movements recalled those of a ball rebounding from wall to wall, was an extremely odd one. "No hurry, no hurry, I assure you! But you smoke, do you not! Have you any tobacco? Here is a cigarette!" he went on, offering his visitor a paquitos. "You notice that I am receiving you here, but my quarters are there behind the wainscoting. The State provides me with that. I am here as it were on the wing, because certain alterations are being made in my rooms. Everything is almost straight now. Do you know that quarters provided by the State are by no means to be despised?"

"I believe you," answered Raskolnikoff, looking at him almost derisively.

"Not to be despised, by any means," repeated Porphyrius Petrovitch, whose mind seemed to be preoccupied with something else—"not to be despised!" he continued in a very loud tone of voice, and drawing himself up close to Raskolnikoff, whom he stared out of countenance. The incessant repetition of the statement that quarters provided by the State were by no means to be despised contrasted singularly, by its platitude, with the serious, profound, enigmatical look he now cast on his visitor.

Raskolnikoff's anger grew in consequence; he could hardly help returning the magistrate's look with an imprudently scornful glance. "Is it true?" the latter commenced, with a complacently insolent air, "is it true that it is a judicial maxim, a maxim resorted to by all magistrates, to begin an interview about trifling things, or even, occasionally, about more serious matter, foreign to the main question however, with a view to embolden, to distract, or even to lull the suspicion of a person under examination, and then all of a sudden to crush him with the main question, just as you strike a man a blow straight between the eyes?"

"Such a custom, I believe, is religiously observed in your profession, is it not?"

"Then you are of opinion that when I spoke to you about quarters provided by the State, I did so——" Saying which, Porphyrius Petrovitch blinked, his face assumed for a moment an expression of roguish gayety, the wrinkles on his brow became smoothed, his small eyes grew smaller still, his features expanded, and, looking Raskolnikoff straight in the face, he burst out into a prolonged fit of nervous laughter, which shook him from head to foot. The young man, on his part, laughed likewise, with more or less of an effort, however, at sight of which Porphyrius's hilarity increased to such an extent that his face grew nearly crimson. At this Raskolnikoff experienced more or less aversion, which led him to forget all caution; he ceased laughing, knitting his brows, and, whilst Porphyrius gave way to his hilarity, which seemed a somewhat feigned one, he fixed on him a look of hatred. In truth, they were both off their guard. Porphyrius had, in fact, laughed at his visitor, who had taken this in bad part; whereas the former seemed to care but little about Raskolnikoff's displeasure. This circumstance gave the young man much matter for thought. He fancied that his visit had in no kind of way discomposed the magistrate; on the contrary, it was Raskolnikoff who had been caught in a trap, a snare, an ambush of some kind or other. The mine was, perhaps, already charged, and might burst at any moment.

Anxious to get straight to the point, Raskolnikoff rose and took up his cap. " Porphyrius Petrovitch," he cried, in a resolute tone of voice, betraying more or less irritation, " yesterday you expressed the desire to subject me to a judicial examination." (He laid special stress on this last word.) " I have called at your bidding; if you have questions to put, do so: if not, allow me to withdraw. I can't afford to waste my time here, as I have other things to attend to. In a word, I must go to the funeral of the official who has been run over, and of whom you have heard speak," he added, regretting, however, the last part of his sentence. Then, with increasing anger, he went on: " Let me tell you that all this worries me! The thing is hanging over much too long. It is that mainly that has made me ill. In one word,"—he continued, his voice seeming more and more irritable, for he felt that the remark about his illness was yet more out of place than the previous one—" in one word, either be good enough to cross-examine me, or let me go this very moment. If you do question me, do so in the usual formal way; otherwise, I shall object. In the meanwhile, adieu, since we have nothing more to do with one another."

" Good gracious! What can you be talking about? Question you about what?" replied the magistrate, immediately ceasing his laugh. " Don't, I beg, disturb yourself." He requested Raskolnikoff to sit down once more, continuing, nevertheless, his tramp about the room. " There is time, plenty of time. The matter is not of such importance after all. On the contrary, I am delighted at your visit—for as such do I take your call. As for my horrid way of laughing, *batuchka,* Rodion Romanovitch, I must apologize. I am a nervous man, and the shrewdness of your observations has tickled me. There are times when I go up and down like an elastic ball, and that for half an hour at a time. I am fond of laughter. My temperament leads me to dread apoplexy. But, pray, do sit down—why remain standing? Do, I must request you, *batuchka;* otherwise I shall fancy that you are cross."

His brows still knit, Raskolnikoff held his tongue, listened, and watched. In the meanwhile he sat down.

"As far as I am concerned, *batuchka,* Rodion Romanovitch, I will tell you something which shall reveal to you my disposition," answered Porphyrius Petrovitch, continuing to fidget about the room, and, as before, avoiding his visitor's gaze. "I live alone, you must know, never go into society, and am, therefore, unknown; add to which, that I am a man on the shady side of forty, somewhat played out. You may have noticed, Rodion Romanovitch, that here—I mean in Russia, of course, and especially in St. Petersburg circles—that when two intelligent men happen to meet who, as yet, are not familiar, but who, however, have mutual esteem—as, for instance, you and I have at this moment—don't know what to talk about for half an hour at a time. They seem, both of them, as if petrified. Everyone else has a subject for conversation—ladies, for instance, people in society, the upper ten—all these sets have some topic or other. It is the thing, but somehow people of the middle-class, like you and I, seem constrained and taciturn. How does that come about, *batuchka?* Have we no social interests? Or is it, rather, owing to our being too straightforward to mislead one another? I don't know. What is your opinion, pray? But do, I beg, remove your cap; one would really fancy that you wanted to be off, and that pains me. I, you must know, am so contented."

Raskolnikoff laid his cap down. He did not, however, become more loquacious; and, with knit brows, listened to Porphyrius's idle chatter. "I suppose," thought he, "he only doles out his small talk to distract my attention."

"I don't offer you any coffee," went on the inexhaustible Porphyrius, "because this is not the place for it, but can you not spend a few minutes with a friend, by way of causing him some little distraction? You must know that all these professional obligations—don't be vexed, *batuchka,* if you see me walking about like this, I am sure you will excuse me, if I tell you how anxious I am not to do so, but movement is so indispensable to me! I am always seated—and, to me, it is quite a luxury to be able to move about for a minute or two. I purpose, in fact, to go through a course of calisthenics. The trapeze is said to stand in high favor amongst State counselors—counselors in office, even amongst privy counselors. Nowadays, in fact, gymnastics have become a positive science. As for these duties of our office, these examinations, all this formality—you yourself, you will remember, touched upon the topic just now, *batuchka*—these examinations, and so forth, sometimes perplex the magistrate much more than the man under suspicion. You said as much just now with as much sense as accuracy." (Raskolnikoff had made no statement of the kind.) "One gets confused, one loses the thread of the investigation. Yet, as far as our judicial customs go, I agree with you fully. Where, for instance, is there a man under suspicion of some kind or other, were it even the most thick-headed moujik, who does not know that the magistrate will commence by putting all sorts of out-of-the-way questions to take him off the scent (if I may be allowed to use your happy simile), and that then he suddenly gives him one between the eyes? A blow of the ax on his sinciput (if again I may be permitted to use your ingenious metaphor)? Hah, hah! And do you mean to say that when I spoke to you about quarters provided by the State, that—hah, hah! You are very caustic. But I won't revert to that again. By-and-by!—one remark produces another, one thought attracts another—but you were talking just now of the practice or form in vogue with the examining magistrate. But what is this form? You know as I do that in many cases the form means nothing at all. Occasionally a simple conversation, a friendly interview, brings about a more certain result. The practice or form will never die out—I can vouch for that; but what, after all, is the form, I ask once more? You can't compel an examining magistrate to be hampered or bound by it everlastingly. His duty or method is, in its way, one of the liberal professions or something very much like it."

Porphyrius Petrovitch stopped a moment to take breath. He kept on talking, now uttering pure nonsense, now again introducing, in spite of this trash, an occasional enigmatical remark, after which he went on with his insipidities. His tramp about the room was more like a race—he moved his stout legs more and more quickly, without looking up; his right hand was thrust deep in the pocket of his coat, whilst with the left he unceasingly gesticulated in a way unconnected with his observations. Raskolnikoff noticed, or fancied he noticed, that, whilst running round and round the room, he had twice stopped near the door, seeming to listen. "Does he expect something?" he asked himself.

"You're perfectly right," resumed Porphyrius cheerily, whilst looking at the young man with a kindliness which immediately awoke the latter's distrust. "Our judicial customs deserve your satire. Our proceedings, which are supposed to be inspired by a profound knowledge of psychology, are very ridiculous ones, and very often useless. Now, to return to our method or form: Suppose for a moment that I am deputed to investigate something or other, and that I know the guilty person to be a certain gentleman. Are you not yourself reading for the law, Rodion Romanovitch?"

"I was some time ago."

"Well, here is a kind of example which may be of use to you later on. Don't run away with the idea that I am setting up as your instructor—God forbid that I should presume to teach anything to a man who treats criminal questions in the public press! Oh, no!—all I am doing is to quote to you, by way of example, a trifling fact. Suppose that I fancy I am convinced of the guilt of a certain man, why, I ask you, should I frighten him prematurely, assuming me to have every evidence against him? Of course, in the case of another man of a different disposition, him I would have arrested forthwith; but, as to the former, why should I not permit him to hang about a little longer? I see you do not quite take me. I will, therefore, endeavor to explain myself more clearly! If, for instance, I should be too quick in issuing a writ, I provide him in doing so with a species of moral support or mainstay—I see you are laughing?" (Raskolnikoff, on the contrary, had no such desire; his lips were set, and his glaring look was not removed from Porphyrius's eyes.) "I assure you that in actual practice such is really the case; men vary much, although, unfortunately, our methods are the same for all. But you will ask me: Supposing you are certain of your proofs? Goodness me, *batuchka!* you know, perhaps as well as I do, what proofs are—half one's time, proofs may be taken either way; and I, a magistrate, am, after all, only a man liable to error.

"Now, what I want is to give to my investigation the precision of a mathematical demonstration—I want my conclusions to be as plain, as indisputable, as that twice two are four. Now, supposing I have this gentleman arrested prematurely, though I may be positively certain that he is *the man,* yet I deprive myself of all future means of proving his guilt. How is that? Because, so to say, I give him, to a certain extent, a definite status; for, by putting him in prison, I pacify him. I give him the chance of investigating his actual state of mind—he will escape me, for he will reflect. In a word, he knows that he is a prisoner, and nothing more. If, on the contrary, I take no kind of notice of the man I fancy guilty, if I do not have him arrested, if I in no way set him on his guard—but if the unfortunate creature is hourly, momentarily, possessed by the suspicion that I know all, that I do not lose sight of him either by night or by day, that he is the object of my indefatigable vigilance—what do you ask will take place under these circumstances? He will lose his self-possession, he will come of his own accord to me, he will provide me with ample evidence against himself, and will enable me to give to the conclusion of my inquiry the accuracy of mathematical proofs, which is not without its charm.

"If such a course succeeds with an uncultured moujik, it is equally efficacious when it concerns an enlightened, intelligent, or even distinguished man. For the main thing, my dear friend, is to determine in what sense a man is developed. The man, I mean, is intelligent, but he has nerves which are *over*-strung. And as for bile—the bile you are forgetting, that plays no small part with similar folk! Believe me, here we have a very mine of information! And what is it to me whether such a man walk about the place in perfect liberty? Let him be at ease—I know him to be my prey, and that he won't escape me! Where, I ask you, could he go to? You may say abroad. A Pole may do so—but my man, never! especially as I watch him, and have taken steps in consquence. Is he likely to escape into the very heart of our country? Not he! for there dwell coarse moujiks, and primitive Russians, without any kind of civilization. My educated friend would prefer going to prison, rather than be in the midst of such surroundings. Besides, what I have been saying up to the present is not the main point—it is the exterior and accessory aspect of the question. He won't escape—not only because he won't know where to go to, but especially, and above all, because he is mine from the *psychological* point of view. What do you think of this explanation? In virtue of a natural law, he will not escape, even if he could do so! Have you ever seen a butterfly close to the candle? My man will hover incessantly round me in the same way as the butterfly gyrates round the candle-light. Liberty will have no longer charms for him; he will grow more and more restless, more and more amazed—let me but give him plenty of time, and he will demean himself in a way to prove his guilt as plainly as that twice two our four! Yes, he will keep hovering about me, describing circles, smaller and smaller, till at last—bang! He has flown into my clutches, and I have got him. That is very nice. You don't think so, perhaps?"

Raskolnikoff kept silent. Pale and immovable, he continued to watch Porphyrius's face with a labored effort of attention. "The lesson is a good one!" he reflected. "But it is not, as yesterday, a case of the cat playing with the mouse. Of course, he does not talk to me in this way for the mere pleasure of showing me his hand; he is much too intelligent for that. He must have something else in view—what can it be? Come, friend, what you do say is only to frighten me. You have no kind of evidence, and the man of yesterday does not exist! All you wish is to perplex me—to enrage me, so as to enable you to make your last move, should you catch me in such a mood, but you will not; all your pains will be in vain! But why should he speak in such covert terms? I presume he must be speculating on the excitability of my nervous system. But, dear friend, that won't go down, in spite of your machinations. We will try and find out what you really have been driving at."

And he prepared to brave boldly the terrible catastrophe he anticipated. Occasionally the desire came upon him to rush on Porphyrius, and to strangle him there and then. From the first moment of having entered the magistrate's office what he had dreaded most was, lest he might lose his temper. He felt his heart beating violently, his lips become parched, his spittle congealed. He resolved, however, to hold his tongue, knowing that, under the circumstances, such would be the best tactics. By similar means, he felt sure that he would not only not become compromised, but that he might succeed in exasperating his enemy, in order to let him drop some imprudent observation. This, at all events, was Raskolnikoff's hope.

"I see you don't believe, you think I am jesting," continued Porphyrius, more and more at his ease, without ceasing to indulge in his little laugh, whilst continuing his perambulation about the room. "You may be right. God has given me a face which only arouses comical thoughts in others. I'm a buffoon. But excuse an old man's cackle. You, Rodion Romanovitch, you are in your prime, and, like all young people, you appreciate, above all things, human intelligence. Intellectual smartness and abstract rational deductions entice you. But, to return to the *special case* we were talking about just now. I must tell you that we have to deal with reality, with nature. This is a very important thing, and how admirably does she often foil the highest skill! Listen to an old man; I am speaking quite seriously, Rodion"—(on saying which Porphyrius Petrovitch, who was hardly thirty-five years of age, seemed all of a sudden to have aged, a sudden metamorphosis had taken place in the whole of his person, nay, in his very voice)—"to an old man who, however, is not wanting in candor. Am I or am

I not candid? What do you think? It seems to me that a man could hardly be more so—for do I not reveal confidence, and that without the prospect of reward? But, to continue, acuteness of mind is, in my opinion, a very fine thing; it is to all intents and purposes an ornament of nature, one of the consolations of life by means of which it would appear a poor magistrate can be easily gulled, who, after all, is often misled by his own imagination, for he is only human. But nature comes to the aid of this human magistrate! There's the rub! And youth, so confident in its own intelligence, youth which tramples under foot every obstacle, forgets this!

"Now, in the *special case* under consideration, the guilty man, I will assume, lies hard and fast, but, when he fancies that all that is left him will be to reap the reward of his mendacity, behold, he will succumb in the very place where such an accident is likely to be most closely analyzed. Assuming even that he may be in a position to account for his syncope by illness or the stifling atmosphere of the locality, he has none the less given rise to suspicion! He has lied incomparably, but he has counted without nature. Here is the pitfall! Again, a man off his guard, from an unwary disposition, may delight in mystifying another who suspects him, and may wantonly pretend to be the very criminal wanted by the authorities; in such a case, he will represent the person in question a little too closely, he will place his foot a little too naturally. Here we have another token. For the nonce his interlocutor may be duped; but, being no fool, he will on the morrow have seen through the subterfuge. Then will our friend become compromised more and more! He will come of his own accord when he is not even called, he will use all kinds of impudent words, remarks, allegories, the meaning of which will be clear to everybody; he will even go so far as to come and ask why he has not been arrested as yet—hah! hah! And such a line of conduct may occur to a person of keen intellect, yes, even to a man of psychologic mind! Nature, my friend, is the most transparent of mirrors. To contemplate her is sufficient. But why do you grow pale, Rodion Romanovitch? Perhaps you are too hot; shall I open the window?"

"By no means, I beg!" cried Raskolnikoff, bursting out laughing. "Don't heed me, pray!" Porphyrius stopped short, waited a moment, and burst out laughing himself. Raskolnikoff, whose hilarity had suddenly died out, rose. "Porphyrius Petrovitch," he shouted in a clear and loud voice, although he could scarcely stand on his trembling legs, "I can no longer doubt that you suspect me of having assassinated this old woman as well as her sister, Elizabeth. Let me tell you that for some time I have had enough of this. If you think you have the right to hunt me down, to have me arrested, hunt me down, have me arrested. But you shall not trifle with me, you shall not torture me." Suddenly his lips quivered, his eyes gleamed, and his voice, which up to that moment had been self-possessed, reached its highest diapason. "I will not permit it," he yelled hoarsely, whilst striking a violent blow on the table. "Do you hear me, Porphyrius Petrovitch, I shall not permit this!"

"But, goodness gracious! what on earth is wrong with you?" asked the magistrate, disturbed to all appearances. "*Batuchka!* Rodion Romanovitch! My good friend! What on earth is the matter with you?"

"I will not permit it!" repeated Raskolnikoff once again.

"*Batuchka!* not so loud, I must request! Someone will hear you, someone may come; and then, what shall we say? Just reflect one moment!" murmured Porphyrius Petrovitch, whose face had approached that of his visitor.

"I will not permit it, I will not permit it!" mechanically pursued Raskolnikoff, but in a minor key, so as to be heard by Porphyrius only.

The latter moved away to open the window. "Let us air the room! Supposing you were to drink some water, dear friend? You have had a slight fit!" He was on the point of going to the door to give his orders to a servant, when he saw a water bottle in a corner. "Drink, *batuchka!*" he murmured, whilst approaching the young man with the bottle, "that may do you some good."

Porphyrius's fright seemed so natural that Raskolnikoff remained silent whilst examining him with curiosity. He refused, however, the proffered water.

"Rodion Romanovitch! My dear friend! If you go on in this way, you will go mad, I am positive! Drink, pray, if only a few drops!" He almost forced the glass of water into his hand. Raskolnikoff raised it mechanically to his lips, when suddenly he thought better of it, and replaced it on the table with disgust. "Yes, yes, you have had a slight fit. One or two more, my friend, and you will have another attack of your malady," observed the magistrate in the kindest tone of voice, appearing greatly agitated. "Is it possible that people can take so little care of themselves? It was the same with Dmitri Prokofitch, who called here yesterday. I admit mine to be a caustic temperament, that mine is a horrid disposition, but that such a meaning could possibly be attributed to harmless remarks He called here yesterday, when you had gone, and in the course of dinner he talked, talked. You had sent him, had you not? But do sit down, *batuchka!* do sit down, for heaven's sake!"

"I did not indeed!—although I knew that he had called, and his object in doing so!" replied Raskolnikoff dryly.

"Did you really know why?"

"I did. And what did you gather from it?"

"I gathered from it, *batuchka!* Rodion Romanovitch, the knowledge of a good many of your doings—in fact, I know all! I know that you went, towards nightfall, *to hire the lodgings*. I know that you pulled the bell, and that a question of yours in connection with bloodstains, as well as your manner, frightened both journeymen and dvorniks. I know what was your mood at the time. Excitement of such a kind will drive you out of your mind, be assured. A praiseworthy indignation is at work within you, complaining now as to destiny, now on the subject of police agents. You keep going here and there to induce people as far as possible to formulate their accusations. This stupid kind of tittle-tattle is hateful to you, and you are anxious to put a stop to it as soon as possible. Am I right? Have I laid finger on the sentiments which actuate you? But you are not satisfied by turning your own brain, you want to do, or rather do, the same thing to my good Razoumikhin. Really, it is a pity to upset so good a fellow! His kindness exposes him more than anyone else to suffer contagion from your own malady. But you shall know all as soon as you shall be calmer. Pray, therefore, once again sit down, *batuchka!* Try and recover your spirits—you seem quite unhinged."

Raskolnikoff rose while looking at him with an air full of contempt. "Tell me once for all," asked the latter, "tell me one way or other, whether I am in your opinion an object for suspicion? Speak up, Porphyrius Petrovitch, and explain yourself without any more beating about the bush, and that forthwith!"

"Just one word, Rodion Romanovitch. This affair will end as God knows best; but still, by way of form, I may have to ask you a few more questions. Hence we are certain to meet again!" And with a smile Porphyrius stopped before the young man. "Certain!" he repeated. One might have fancied that he wished to say something more. But he did not do so.

"Forgive my strange manner just now, Porphyrius Petrovitch, I was hasty," began Raskolnikoff, who had regained all his self-possession, and who even experienced an irresistible wish to chaff the magistrate.

"Don't say any more, it was nothing," replied Porphyrius in almost joyful tone. "Till we meet again!"

"Till we meet again!"

The young man forthwith went home. Having got there, he threw himself on his couch, and for a quarter of an hour he tried to arrange his ideas somewhat, inasmuch as they were very confused.

Within a few days Raskolnikoff convinced himself that Porphyrius Petrovitch had no real proofs. Deciding to go out, in search of fresh air, he took up his cap and made for the door, deep in thought. For the first time he felt in the best of health, really well. He opened the door, and encountered Porphyrius face to face. The latter entered.

Raskolnikoff staggered for a moment, but quickly recovered. The visit did not dismay him. "Perhaps this is the finale, but why does he come upon me like a cat, with muffled tread? Can he have been listening?"

"I have been thinking for a long time of calling on you, and, as I was passing, I thought I might drop in for a few minutes. Where are you off to? I won't detain you long, only the time to smoke a cigarette, if you will allow me?"

"Be seated, Porphyrius Petrovitch, be seated," said Raskolnikoff to his guest, assuming such an air of friendship that he himself could have been astonished at his own affability. Thus the victim, in fear and trembling for his life, at last does not feel the knife at his throat. He seated himself in front of Porphyrius, and gazed upon him without flinching. Porphyrius blinked a little, and commenced rolling his cigarette.

"Speak! speak!" Raskolnikoff mutely cried in his heart. "What are you going to say?"

"Oh, these cigarettes!" Porphyrius Petrovitch commenced at last, "they'll be the death of me, and yet I can't give them up! I am always coughing—a tickling in the throat is setting in, and I am asthmatical. I have been to consult Botkine of late; he examines every one of his patients at least half an hour at a time. After having thumped and bumped me about for ever so long, he told me, amongst other things: 'Tobacco is a bad thing for you—your lungs are affected.' That's all very well, but how am I to go without my tobacco? What am I to use as a substitute? Unfortunately, I can't drink, hah! hah! Everything is relative, I suppose, Rodion Romanovitch?"

"There, he is beginning with some more of his silly palaver!" Raskolnikoff growled to himself. His late interview with the magistrate suddenly occurred to him, at which anger affected his mind.

"Did you know, by-the-by, that I called on you the night before last?" continued Porphyrius, looking about. "I was in this very room. I happened to be coming this way, just as I am going to-day, and the idea struck me to drop in.

Your door was open—I entered, hoping to see you in a few minutes, but went away again without leaving my name with your servant. Do you never shut your place?"

Raskolnikoff's face grew gloomier and gloomier. Porphyrius Petrovitch evidently guessed what the latter was thinking about.

"You did not expect visitors, Rodion Romanovitch?" said Porphyrius, smiling graciously.

"I have called just to clear things up a bit. I owe you an explanation," he went on, smiling and gently slapping the young man on the knee; but almost at the self-same moment his face assumed a serious and even sad expression, to Raskolnikoff's great astonishment, to whom the magistrate appeared in quite a different light. "At our last interview, an unusual scene took place between us, Rodion. I somehow feel that I did not behave very well to you. You remember, I dare say, how we parted; we were both more or less excited. I fear we were wanting in the most common courtesy, and yet we are both of us gentlemen."

"What can he be driving at now?" Raskolnikoff asked himself. looking inquiringly at Porphyrius.

"I have come to the conclusion that it would be much better for us to be more candid to one another," continued the magistrate, turning his head gently aside and looking on the ground, as if he feared to annoy his former victim by his survey. "We must not have scenes of that kind again. If Mikolka had not turned up on that occasion, I really do not know how things would have ended. You are naturally, my dear Rodion, very irritable, and I must own that I had taken that into consideration, for, when driven in a corner, many a man lets out his secrets. 'If,' I said to myself, 'I could only squeeze some kind of evidence out of him, however trivial, provided it were real, tangible, and palpable, different from all my psychological inferences!' That was my idea. Sometimes we succeed by some such proceeding, but unfortunately that does not happen every day, as I conclusively discovered on the occasion in question. I had relied too much on your character."

"But why tell me all this now?" stammered Raskolnikoff, without in any way understanding the object of his interlocutor's question. "Does he, perhaps, think me really innocent?"

"You wish to know why I tell you this? Because I look upon it as a sacred duty to explain my line of action. Because I subjected you, as I now fully acknowledge, to cruel torture. I do not wish, my dear Rodion, that you should take me for an ogre. Hence, by way of justification, I purpose explaining to you what led up to it. I think it needless to account for the nature and origin of the reports which circulated originally, as also why you were connected with them. There was, however, one circumstance, a purely fortuitous one, and which need not now be mentioned, which aroused my suspicions. From these reports and accidental circumstances, the same conclusion became evolved for me. I make this statement in all sincerity, for it was I who first implicated you with the matter. I do not in any way notice the particulars notified on the articles found at the old woman's. That, and several others of a similar nature, are of no kind of importance. At the same time, I was aware of the incident which had happened at the police office. What occurred there has been told me with the utmost accuracy by some one who had been closely connected with it, and who, most unwittingly, had brought things to a head. Very well, then, how, under such circumstances, could a man help becoming biased? 'One swallow does not make a summer,' as the English proverb says: a hundred suppositions do not constitute one single proof. Reason speaks in that way, I admit, but let a man try to subject prejudice to reason. An examining magistrate, after all, is only a man—hence given to prejudice.

"I also remembered, on the occasion in question, the article you had published in some review. That virgin effort of yours, I assure you, I greatly enjoyed—as an amateur, however, be it understood. It was redolent of sincere conviction, of genuine enthusiasm. The article was evidently written some sleepless night under feverish conditions. That author, I said to myself, while reading it, will do better things than that. How now, I ask you, could I avoid connecting that with what followed upon it? Such a tendency was but a natural one. Am I saying anything I should not? Am I at this moment committing myself to any definite statement? I do no more than give utterance to a thought which struck me at the time. What may I be thinking about now? Nothing—or, at all events, what is tantamount to it. For the time being, I have to deal with Mikolka; there are facts which implicate him—what are facts, after all? If I tell you all this now, as I am doing, I do so, I assure you, most emphatically, so that your mind and conscience may absolve me from my behavior on the day of our interview. 'Why,' you will ask, 'did you not come on that occasion and have my place searched?' I did so, hah! hah! I went when you were ill in bed—but, let me tell you, not officially, not in my magisterial capacity; but go I did. We had your rooms turned topsy-turvy at our very first suspicions, but *umsonst*! Then I said to myself: 'That man will make me a call, he will come of his own accord, and that before very long! If he is guilty, he will be bound to come. Other kinds of men would not do so, but this one will.'

"And you remember, of course, Mr. Razoumikhin's chattering? We had purposely informed him of some of our suspicions, hoping that he might make you uneasy, for we knew perfectly well that Razoumikhin would not be able to contain his indignation. Zametoff, in particular, had been struck by your boldness, and it certainly was a bold thing for a person to exclaim all of a sudden in an open *traktir*: 'I am an assassin!' That was really too much of a good thing. Well, I waited for you with trusting patience, and, lo and behold, Providence sends you! How my heart did beat when I saw you coming! Now, I ask you, where was the need of your coming at that time at all? If you remember, you came in laughing immoderately. That laughter gave me food for thought, but, had I not been very prejudiced at the time, I should have taken no notice of it. And as for Mr. Razoumikhin on that occasion—ah! the stone, the stone, you will remember, under which the stolen things are hidden? I fancy I can see it from here; it is somewhere in a kitchen garden—it was a kitchen garden you mentioned to Zametoff, was it not? And then, when your article was broached, we fancied we discovered a latent thought beneath every word you uttered. That was the way, Rodion Romanovitch, that my conviction grew little by little. 'And yet,' said I to myself, 'all that may be explained in quite a different way, and perhaps more rationally. After all, a real proof, however slight, would be far more valuable.' But, when I heard all about the bell-ringing, my doubts vanished; I fancied I had the indispensable proof, and did not seem to care for further investigation.

"We are face to face with a weird and gloomy case—a case of a contemporary character, if I may say so—a case possessing, in the fullest sense of the word, the hallmark of time, and circumstances pointing to a person and life of different surroundings. The real culprit is a theorist, a bookworm, who, in a tentative kind of way, has done a more than bold thing; but this boldness of his is of quite a peculiar and one-sided stamp; it is, after a fashion, like that of a man who hurls himself from the top of a mountain or church steeple. The man in question has forgotten to cut off evidence, and, in order to work out a theory, has killed two persons. He has committed a murder, and yet has not known how to take possession of the pelf; what he has taken he has hidden under a stone. The anguish he experienced while hearing knocking at the door and the continued ringing of the bell, was not enough for him; no, yielding to an irresistible desire of experiencing the same horror, he has positively revisited the empty place and once more pulled the bell. Let us, if you like, attribute the whole of this to disease—to a semidelirious condition—by all means; but there is yet another point to be considered: he has committed a murder, and yet continues to look upon himself as a righteous man!"

Raskolnikoff trembled in every limb. "Then, who—who is it—that has committed the murder?" he stammered forth, in jerky accents.

The examining magistrate sank back in his chair as though astonished at such a question. "Who committed the murder?" he retorted, as if he could not believe his own ears. "Why, you—you did, Rodion Romanovitch! You!—" he added, almost in a whisper, and in a tone of profound conviction.

Raskolnikoff suddenly rose, waited for a few moments, and sat down again, without uttering a single word. All the muscles of his face were slightly convulsed.

"Why, I see your lips tremble just as they did the other day," observed Porphyrius Petrovitch, with an air of interest. "You have not, I think, thoroughly realized the object of my visit, Rodion Romanovitch," he pursued, after a moment's silence, "hence your great astonishment. I have called with the express intention of plain speaking, and to reveal the truth."

"It was not I who committed the murder," stammered the young man, defending himself very much like a child caught in the act of doing wrong.

"Yes, yes, it was you, Rodion Romanovitch, it was you, and you alone," replied the magistrate with severity. "Confess or not, as you think best; for the time being, that is nothing to me. In either case, my conviction is arrived at."

"If that is so, why have you called?" asked Raskolnikoff angrily. "I once more repeat the question I have put you: If you think me guilty, why not issue a warrant against me?"

"What a question! But I will answer you categorically. To begin with, your arrest would not benefit me!"

"It would not benefit you? How can that be? From the moment of being convinced, you ought to——"

"What is the use of my conviction, after all? For the time being, it is only built on sand. And why should I have you placed *at rest?* Of course, I purpose having you arrested—I have called to give you a hint to that effect—and yet I do not hesitate to tell you that I shall gain nothing by it. Considering, therefore, the interest I feel for you, I earnestly urge you to go and acknowledge your crime. I called before to give the same advice. It is by far the wisest thing you can do—for you as well as for myself, who will then wash my hands of the affair. Now, am I candid enough?"

Raskolnikoff considered a moment. "Listen to me, Porphyrius Petrovitch! To use your own statement, you have against me nothing but psychological sentiments, and yet you aspire to mathematical evidence. Who has told you that you are absolutely right?

"Yes, Rodion Romanovitch, I am absolutely right. I hold a proof! And this proof I came in possession of the other day: God has sent it me!"

"What is it?"

"I shall not tell you, Rodion Romanovitch. But I have no right to procrastinate. I am going to have you arrested! Judge, therefore: whatever you purpose doing is not of much importance to me just now; all I say and have said has been solely done for your interest. The best alternative is the one I suggest, you may depend on it, Rodion Romanovitch! When I shall have had you arrested—at the expiration of a month or two, or even three, if you like—you will remember my words, and you will confess. You will be led to do so insensibly, almost without being conscious of it. I am even of opinion that, after careful consideration, you will make up your mind to make atonement. You do not believe me at this moment, but wait and see. In truth, Rodion Romanovitch, suffering is a grand thing. In the mouth of a coarse man, who deprives himself of nothing, such a statement might afford food for laughter. Never mind, however, but there lies a theory in suffering. Mikolka is right. You won't escape, Rodion Romanovitch."

Raskolnikoff rose and took his cap. Porphyrius Petrovitch did the same. "Are you going for a walk? The night will be a fine one, as long as we get no storm. That would be all the better though, as it would clear the air."

"Porphyrius Petrovitch," said the young man, in curt and hurried accents, "do not run away with the idea that I have been making a confession to-day. You are a strange man, and I have listened to you from pure curiosity. But remember, I have confessed to nothing. Pray do not forget that."

"I shall not forget it, you may depend— How he is trembling! Don't be uneasy, my friend—I shall not forget your advice. Take a little stroll, only do not go beyond certain limits. I must, however, at all costs," he added with lowered voice, "ask a small favor of you; it is a delicate one, but has an importance of its own; assuming, although I would view such a contingency as an improbable one—assuming, during the next forty-eight hours, the fancy were to come upon you to put an end to your life (excuse me my foolish supposition), would you mind leaving behind you something in the shape of a note—a line or so—pointing to the spot where the stone is?—that would be very considerate. Well, *au revoir*! May God send you good thoughts!"

Porphyrius withdrew, avoiding Raskolnikoff's eye. The latter approached the window, and impatiently waited till, according to his calculation, the magistrate should be some distance from the house. He then passed out himself in great haste.

A few days later, the prophecy of Porphyrius Petrovitch was fulfilled. Driven by the torment of uncertainty and doubt, Raskolnikoff made up his mind to confess his crime. Hastening through the streets, and stumbling up the narrow stairway, he presented himself at the police office.

With pale lips and fixed gaze, Raskolnikoff slowly advanced toward Elia Petrovitch. Resting his head upon the table behind which the lieutenant was seated, he wished to speak, but could only give vent to a few unintelligible sounds.

"You are in pain, a chair! Pray sit down! Some water!"

Raskolnikoff allowed himself to sink on the chair that was offered him, but he could not take his eyes off Elia Petrovitch, whose face expressed a very unpleasant surprise. For a moment both men looked at one another in silence. Water was brought!

"It was I—" commenced Raskolnikoff.

"Drink."

With a movement of his hand the young man pushed aside the glass which was offered him; then, in a low-toned but distinct voice he made, with several interruptions, the following statement:—

"It was I who killed, with a hatchet, the old moneylender and her sister, Elizabeth, and robbery was my motive."

Elia Petrovitch called for assistance. People rushed in from various directions. Raskolnikoff repeated his confession.

Anton Chekhoff

The Safety Match

ON the morning of October 6, 1885, in the office of the Inspector of Police of the second division of S—— District, there appeared a respectably dressed young man, who announced that his master, Marcus Ivanovitch Klausoff, a retired officer of the Horse Guards, separated from his wife, had been murdered. While making this announcement the young man was white and terribly agitated. His hands trembled and his eyes were full of terror.

" Whom have I the honor of addressing? " asked the inspector.

" Psyekoff, Lieutenant Klausoff's agent; agriculturist and mechanician! "

The inspector and his deputy, on visiting the scene of the occurrence in company with Psyekoff, found the following: Near the wing in which Klausoff had lived was gathered a dense crowd. The news of the murder had sped swift as lightning through the neighborhood, and the peasantry, thanks to the fact that the day was a holiday, had hurried together from all the neighboring villages. There was much commotion and talk. Here and there, pale, tear-stained faces were seen. The door of Klausoff's bedroom was found locked. The key was inside.

" It is quite clear that the scoundrels got in by the window! " said Psyekoff as they examined the door.

They went to the garden, into which the bedroom window opened. The window looked dark and ominous. It was covered by a faded green curtain. One corner of the curtain was slightly turned up, which made it possible to look into the bedroom.

"Did any of you look into the window?" asked the inspector.

"Certainly not, your worship!" answered Ephraim, the gardener, a little gray-haired old man, who looked like a retired sergeant. "Who's going to look in, if all their bones are shaking?"

"Ah, Marcus Ivanovitch, Marcus Ivanovitch!" sighed the inspector, looking at the window, "I told you you would come to a bad end! I told the dear man, but he wouldn't listen! Dissipation doesn't bring any good!"

"Thanks to Ephraim," said Psyekoff; "but for him, we would never have guessed. He was the first to guess that something was wrong. He comes to me this morning, and says: 'Why is the master so long getting up? He hasn't left his bedroom for a whole week!' The moment he said that, it was just as if some one had hit me with an ax. The thought flashed through my mind, 'We haven't had a sight of him since last Saturday, and to-day is Sunday'! Seven whole days—not a doubt of it!"

"Ay, poor fellow!" again sighed the inspector. "He was a clever fellow, finely educated, and kind-hearted at that! And in society, nobody could touch him! But he was a waster, God rest his soul! I was prepared for anything since he refused to live with Olga Petrovna. Poor thing, a good wife, but a sharp tongue! Stephen!" the inspector called to one of his deputies, "go over to my house this minute, and send Andrew to the captain to lodge an information with him! Tell him that Marcus Ivanovitch has been murdered. And run over to the orderly; why should he sit there, kicking his heels? Let him come here! And go as fast as you can to the examining magistrate, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch. Tell him to come over here! Wait; I'll write him a note!"

The inspector posted sentinels around the wing, wrote a letter to the examining magistrate, and then went over to the director's for a glass of tea. Ten minutes later he was sitting on a stool, carefully nibbling a lump of sugar, and swallowing the scalding tea.

"There you are!" he was saying to Psyekoff; "there you are! A noble by birth! a rich man—a favorite of the gods, you may say, as Pushkin has it, and what did he come to? He drank and dissipated and—there you are—he's murdered."

After a couple of hours the examining magistrate drove up. Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch Chubikoff—for that was the magistrate's name—was a tall, fleshy old man of sixty, who had been wrestling with the duties of his office for a quarter of a century. Everybody in the district knew him as an honest man, wise, energetic, and in love with his work. He was accompanied to the scene of the murder by his inveterate companion, fellow worker, and secretary, Dukovski, a tall young fellow of twenty-six.

"Is it possible, gentlemen?" cried Chubikoff, entering Psyekoff's room, and quickly shaking hands with everyone. Is it possible? Marcus Ivanovitch? Murdered? No! It is impossible! Im-poss-i-ble!"

"Go in there!" sighed the inspector.

"Lord, have mercy on us! Only last Friday I saw him at the fair in Farabankoff. I had a drink of vodka with him, save the mark!"

"Go in there!" again sighed the inspector.

They sighed, uttered exclamations of horror, drank a glass of tea each, and went to the wing.

"Get back!" the orderly cried to the peasants.

Going to the wing, the examining magistrate began his work by examining the bedroom door. The door proved to be of pine, painted yellow, and was uninjured. Nothing was found which could serve as a clew. They had to break in the door.

"Everyone not here on business is requested to keep away!" said the magistrate, when, after much hammering and shaking, the door yielded to ax and chisel. "I request this, in the interest of the investigation. Orderly, don't let anyone in!"

Chubikoff, his assistant, and the inspector opened the door, and hesitatingly, one after the other, entered the room. Their eyes met the following sight: Beside the single window stood the big wooden bed with a huge feather mattress. On the crumpled feather bed lay a tumbled, crumpled quilt. The pillow, in a cotton pillow-case, also much crumpled, was dragging on the floor. On the table beside the bed lay a silver watch and a silver twenty-kopeck piece. Beside them lay some sulphur matches. Beside the bed, the little table, and the single chair, there was no furniture in the room. Looking under the bed, the inspector saw a couple of dozen empty bottles, an old straw hat, and a quart of vodka. Under the table lay one top boot, covered with dust. Casting a glance around the room, the magistrate frowned and grew red in the face.

"Scoundrels!" he muttered, clenching his fists.

"And where is Marcus Ivanovitch?" asked Dukovski in a low voice.

"Mind your own business!" Chubikoff answered roughly. "Be good enough to examine the floor! This is not the first case of the kind I have had to deal with! Eugraph Kuzmitch," he said, turning to the inspector, and lowering his voice, "in 1870 I had another case like this. But you must remember it—the murder of the merchant Portraitoff. It was just the same there. The scoundrels murdered him, and dragged the corpse out through the window——"

Chubikoff went up to the window, pulled the curtain to one side, and carefully pushed the window. The window opened.

"It opens, you see! It wasn't fastened. Hm! There are tracks under the window. Look! There is the track of a knee! Somebody got in there. We must examine the window thoroughly."

"There is nothing special to be found on the floor," said Dukovski. "No stains or scratches. The only thing I found was a struck safety match. Here it is! So far as I remember, Marcus Ivanovitch did not smoke. And he always used sulphur matches, never safety matches. Perhaps this safety match may serve as a clew!"

"Oh, do shut up!" cried the magistrate deprecatingly. "You go on about your match! I can't abide these dreamers! Instead of chasing matches, you had better examine the bed!"

After a thorough examination of the bed, Dukovski reported:

"There are no spots, either of blood or of anything else. There are likewise no new torn places. On the pillow there are signs of teeth. The quilt is stained with something which looks like beer and smells like beer. The general aspect of the bed gives grounds for thinking that a struggle took place on it."

"I know there was a struggle, without your telling me! You are not being asked about a struggle. Instead of looking for struggles, you had better——"

"Here is one top boot, but there is no sign of the other."

"Well, and what of that?"

"It proves that they strangled him, while he was taking his boots off. He hadn't time to take the second boot off when——"

"There you go!—and how do you know they strangled him?"

"There are marks of teeth on the pillow. The pillow itself is badly crumpled, and thrown a couple of yards from the bed."

"Listen to his foolishness! Better come into the garden. You would be better employed examining the garden than digging around here. I can do that without you!"

When they reached the garden they began by examining the grass. The grass under the window was crushed and trampled. A bushy burdock growing under the window close to the wall was also trampled. Dukovski succeeded in finding on it some broken twigs and a piece of cotton wool. On the upper branches were found some fine hairs of dark blue wool.

"What color was his last suit?" Dukovski asked Psyekoff.

"Yellow crash."

"Excellent! You see they wore blue!"

A few twigs of the burdock were cut off, and carefully wrapped in paper by the investigators. At this point Police Captain Artsuybasheff Svistakovski and Dr. Tyutyeff arrived. The captain bade them "Good day!" and immediately began to satisfy his curiosity. The doctor, a tall, very lean man, with dull eyes, a long nose, and a pointed chin, without greeting anyone or asking about anything, sat down on a log, sighed, and began:

"The Servians are at war again! What in heaven's name can they want now? Austria, it's all your doing!"

The examination of the window from the outside did not supply any conclusive data. The examination of the grass and the bushes nearest to the window yielded a series of useful clews. For example, Dukovski succeeded in discovering a long, dark streak, made up of spots, on the grass, which led some distance into the center of the garden. The streak ended under one of the lilac bushes in a dark brown stain. Under this same lilac bush was found a top boot, which turned out to be the fellow of the boot already found in the bedroom.

"That is a blood stain made some time ago," said Dukovski, examining the spot.

At the word "blood" the doctor rose, and going over lazily, looked at the spot.

"Yes, it is blood!" he muttered.

"That shows he wasn't strangled, if there was blood," said Chubikoff, looking sarcastically at Dukovski.

"They strangled him in the bedroom; and here, fearing he might come round again, they struck him a blow with some sharp-pointed instrument. The stain under the bush proves that he lay there a considerable time, while they were looking about for some way of carrying him out of the garden.

"Well, and how about the boot?"

"The boot confirms completely my idea that they murdered him while he was taking his boots off before going to bed. He had already taken off one boot, and the other, this one here, he had only had time to take half off. The half-off boot came off of itself, while the body was dragged over, and fell——"

"There's a lively imagination for you!" laughed Chubikoff. "He goes on and on like that! When will you learn enough to drop your deductions? Instead of arguing and deducing, it would be much better if you took some of the blood-stained grass for analysis!"

When they had finished their examination, and drawn a plan of the locality, the investigators went to the director's office to write their report and have breakfast. While they were breakfasting they went on talking:

"The watch, the money, and so on—all untouched—" Chubikoff began, leading off the talk, "show as clearly as that two and two are four that the murder was not committed for the purpose of robbery."

"The murder was committed by an educated man!" insisted Dukovski.

"What evidence have you of that?"

"The safety match proves that to me, for the peasants hereabouts are not yet acquainted with safety matches. Only the landowners use them, and by no means all of them. And it is evident that there was not one murderer, but at least three. Two held him, while one killed him. Klausoff was strong, and the murderers must have known it!"

"What good would his strength be, supposing he was asleep?"

"The murderers came on him while he was taking off his boots. If he was taking off his boots, that proves that he wasn't asleep!"

"Stop inventing your deductions! Better eat!"

"In my opinion, your worship," said the gardener Ephraim, setting the samovar on the table, "it was nobody but Nicholas who did this dirty trick!"

"Quite possible," said Psyekoff.

"And who is Nicholas?"

"The master's valet, your worship," answered Ephraim. "Who else could it be? He's a rascal, your worship! He's a drunkard and a blackguard, the like of which Heaven should not permit! He always took the master his vodka and put the master to bed. Who else could it be? And I also venture to point out to your worship, he once boasted at the public house that he would kill the master! It happened on account of Aquilina, the woman, you know. He was making up to a soldier's widow. She pleased the master; the master made friends with her himself, and Nicholas—naturally, he was mad! He is rolling about drunk in the kitchen now. He is crying, and telling lies, saying he is sorry for the master——"

The examining magistrate ordered Nicholas to be brought. Nicholas, a lanky young fellow, with a long, freckled nose, narrow-chested, and wearing an old jacket of his master's, entered Psyekoff's room, and bowed low before the magistrate. His face was sleepy and tear-stained. He was tipsy and could hardly keep his feet.

"Where is your master?" Chubikoff asked him.

"Murdered! your worship!"

As he said this, Nicholas blinked and began to weep.

"We know he was murdered. But where is he now? Where is his body?"

"They say he was dragged out of the window and buried in the garden!"

"Hum! The results of the investigation are known in the kitchen already!—That's bad! Where were you, my good fellow, the night the master was murdered? Saturday night, that is."

Nicholas raised his head, stretched his neck, and began to think.

"I don't know, your worship," he said. "I was drunk and don't remember."

"An alibi!" whispered Dukovski, smiling, and rubbing his hands.

"So-o! And why is there blood under the master's window?"

Nicholas jerked his head up and considered.

"Hurry up!" said the Captain of Police.

"Right away! That blood doesn't amount to anything, your worship! I was cutting a chicken's throat. I was doing it quite simply, in the usual way, when all of a sudden it broke away and started to run. That is where the blood came from."

Ephraim declared that Nicholas did kill a chicken every evening, and always in some new place, but that nobody ever heard of a half-killed chicken running about the garden, though of course it wasn't impossible.

"An alibi," sneered Dukovski; "and what an asinine alibi!"

"Did you know Aquilina?"

"Yes, your worship, I know her."

"And the master cut you out with her?"

"Not at all. *He* cut me out—Mr. Psyekoff there, Ivan Mikhailovitch; and the master cut Ivan Mikhailovitch out. That is how it was."

Psyekoff grew confused and began to scratch his left eye. Dukovski looked at him attentively, noted his confusion, and started. He noticed that the director had dark blue trousers, which he had not observed before. The trousers reminded him of the dark blue threads found on the burdock. Chubikoff in his turn glanced suspiciously at Psyekoff.

"Go!" he said to Nicholas. "And now permit me to put a question to you, Mr. Psyekoff. Of course you were here last Saturday evening?"

"Yes! I had supper with Marcus Ivanovitch about ten o'clock."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards—afterwards— Really, I do not remember," stammered Psyekoff. "I had a good deal to drink at supper. I don't remember when or where I went to sleep. Why are you all looking at me like that, as if I was the murderer?"

"Where were you when you woke up?"

"I was in the servants' kitchen, lying behind the stove! They can all confirm it. How I got behind the stove I don't know——"

"Do not get agitated. Did you know Aquilina?"

"There's nothing extraordinary about that——"

"She first liked you and then preferred Klausoff?"

"Yes. Ephraim, give us some more mushrooms! Do you want some more tea, Eugraph Kuzmitch?"

A heavy, oppressive silence began and lasted fully five minutes. Dukoyski silently kept his piercing eyes fixed on Psyekoff's pale face. The silence was finally broken by the examining magistrate:

"We must go to the house and talk with Maria Ivanovna, the sister of the deceased. Perhaps she may be able to supply some clews."

Chubikoff and his assistant expressed their thanks for the breakfast, and went toward the house. They found Klausoff's sister, Maria Ivanovna, an old maid of forty-five, at prayer before the big case of family icons. When she saw the portfolios in her guests' hands, and their official caps, she grew pale.

"Let me begin by apologizing for disturbing, so to speak, your devotions," began the gallant Chubikoff, bowing and scraping. "We have come to you with a request. Of course, you have heard already. There is a suspicion that your dear brother, in some way or other, has been murdered. The will of God, you know. No one can escape death, neither czar nor plowman. Could you not help us with some clew, some explanation——?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" said Maria Ivanovna, growing still paler, and covering her face with her hands. "I can tell you nothing. Nothing! I beg you! I know nothing—What can I do? Oh, no! no!—not a word about my brother! If I die, I won't say anything!"

Maria Ivanovna began to weep, and left the room. The investigators looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders, and beat a retreat.

"Confound the woman!" scolded Dukovski, going out of the house. "It is clear she knows something, and is concealing it! And the chambermaid has a queer expression too! Wait, you wretches! We'll ferret it all out!"

In the evening Chubikoff and his deputy, lit on their road by the pale moon, wended their way homeward. They sat in their carriage and thought over the results of the day. Both were tired and kept silent. Chubikoff was always unwilling to talk while traveling, and the talkative Dukovski remained silent, to fall in with the elder man's humor. But at the end of their journey the deputy could hold in no longer, and said:

"It is quite certain," he said, "that Nicholas had something to do with the matter. *Non dubitandum est!* You can see by his face what sort of a case he is! His alibi betrays him, body and bones. But it is also certain that he did not set the thing going. He was only the stupid hired tool. You agree? And the humble Psyekoff was not without some slight share in the matter. His dark blue breeches, his agitation, his lying behind the stove in terror after the murder, his alibi and—Aquilina——"

"'Grind away, Emilian; it's your week!' So, according to you, whoever knew Aquilina is the murderer! Hothead! You ought to be sucking a bottle, and not handling affairs! You were one of Aquilina's admirers yourself—does it follow that you are implicated too?"

"Aquilina was cook in your house for a month. I am saying nothing about that! The night before that Saturday I was playing cards with you, and saw you, otherwise I should be after you too! It isn't the woman that matters, old chap! It is the mean, nasty, low spirit of jealousy that matters. The retiring young man was not pleased when they got the better of him, you see! His vanity, don't you see? He wanted revenge. Then, those thick lips of his suggest passion. So there you have it: wounded self-love and passion. That is quite enough motive for a murder. We have two of them in our hands; but who is the third? Nicholas and Psyekoff held him, but who smothered him? Psyekoff is shy, timid, an all-round coward. And Nicholas would not know how to smother with a pillow. His sort use an ax or a club. Some third person did the smothering; but who was it?"

Dukovski crammed his hat down over his eyes and pondered. He remained silent until the carriage rolled up to the magistrate's door.

"Eureka!" he said, entering the little house and throwing off his overcoat. "Eureka, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! The only thing I can't understand is, how it did not occur to me sooner! Do you know who the third person was?"

"Oh, for goodness sake, shut up! There is supper! Sit down to your evening meal!"

The magistrate and Dukovski sat down to supper. Dukovski poured himself out a glass of vodka, rose, drew himself up, and said, with sparkling eyes:

"Well, learn that the third person, who acted in concert with that scoundrel Psyekoff, and did the smothering, was a woman! Yes-s! I mean—the murdered man's sister, Maria Ivanovna!"

Chubikoff choked over his vodka, and fixed his eyes on Dukovski.

"You aren't—what's-its-name? Your head isn't what-do-you-call-it? You haven't a pain in it?"

"I am perfectly well! Very well, let us say that I am crazy; but how do you explain her confusion when we appeared? How do you explain her unwillingness to give us any information? Let us admit that these are trifles. Very well! All right! But remember their relations. She detested her brother. She never forgave him for living apart from his wife. She is of the Old Faith, while in her eyes he is a godless profligate. There is where the germ of her hate was hatched. They say he succeeded in making her believe that he was an angel of Satan. He even went in for spiritualism in her presence!"

"Well, what of that?"

"You don't understand? She, as a member of the Old Faith, murdered him through fanaticism. It was not only that she was putting to death a weed, a profligate—she was freeing the world of an antichrist!—and there, in her opinion, was her service, her religious achievement! Oh, you don't know those old maids of the Old Faith. Read Dostoyevsky! And what does Lyeskoff say about them, or Petcherski? It was she, and nobody else, even if you cut me open. She smothered him! O treacherous woman! wasn't that the reason why she was kneeling before the icons, when we came in, just to take our attention away? 'Let me kneel down and pray,' she said to herself, 'and they will think I am tranquil and did not expect them!' That is the plan of all novices in crime, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch, old pal! My dear old man, won't you intrust this business to me? Let me personally bring it through! Friend, I began it and I will finish it!"

Chubikoff shook his head and frowned.

"We know how to manage difficult matters ourselves," he said; "and your business is not to push yourself in where you don't belong. Write from dictation when you are dictated to; that is your job!"

Dukovski flared up, banged the door, and disappeared.

"Clever rascal!" muttered Chubikoff, glancing after him. "Awfully clever! But too much of a hothead. I must buy him a cigar case at the fair as a present."

The next day, early in the morning, a young man with a big head and a pursed-up mouth, who came from Klausoff's place, was introduced to the magistrate's office. He said he was the shepherd Daniel, and brought a very interesting piece of information.

"I was a bit drunk," he said. "I was with my pal till midnight. On my way home, as I was drunk, I went into the river for a bath. I was taking a bath, when I looked up. Two men were walking along the dam, carrying something black. 'Shoo!' I cried at them. They got scared, and went off like the wind toward Makareff's cabbage garden. Strike me dead, if they weren't carrying away the master!"

That same day, toward evening, Psyekoff and Nicholas were arrested and brought under guard to the district town. In the town they were committed to the cells of the prison.

II

A FORTNIGHT passed.

It was morning. The magistrate Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch was sitting in his office before a green table, turning over the papers of the "Klausoff case"; Dukovski was striding restlessly up and down, like a wolf in a cage.

"You are convinced of the guilt of Nicholas and Psyekoff," he said, nervously plucking at his young beard. "Why will you not believe in the guilt of Maria Ivanovna? Are there not proofs enough for you?"

"I don't say I am not convinced. I am convinced, but somehow I don't believe it! There are no real proofs, but just a kind of philosophizing—fanaticism, this and that——"

"You can't do without an ax and bloodstained sheets. Those jurists! Very well, I'll prove it to you! You will stop sneering at the psychological side of the affair! To Siberia with your Maria Ivanovna! I will prove it! If philosophy is not enough for you, I have something substantial for you. It will show you how correct my philosophy is. Just give me permission——"

"What are you going on about?"

"About the safety match! Have you forgotten it? I haven't! I am going to find out who struck it in the murdered man's room. It was not Nicholas that struck it; it was not Psyekoff, for neither of them had any matches when they were examined; it was the third person, Maria Ivanovna. I will prove it to you. Just give me permission to go through the district to find out."

"That's enough! Sit down. Let us go on with the examination."

Dukovski sat down at a little table, and plunged his long nose in a bundle of papers.

"Bring in Nicholas Tetekhoff!" cried the examining magistrate.

They brought Nicholas in. Nicholas was pale and thin as a rail. He was trembling.

"Tetekhoff!" began Chubikoff. "In 1879 you were tried in the Court of the First Division, convicted of theft, and sentenced to imprisonment. In 1882 you were tried a second time for theft, and were again imprisoned. We know all——"

Astonishment was depicted on Nicholas's face. The examining magistrate's omniscience startled him. But soon his expression of astonishment changed to extreme indignation. He began to cry and requested permission to go and wash his face and quiet down. They led him away.

"Brink in Psyekoff!" ordered the examining magistrate.

They brought in Psyekoff. The young man had changed greatly during the last few days. He had grown thin and pale, and looked haggard. His eyes had an apathetic expression.

"Sit down, Psyekoff," said Chubikoff. "I hope that to-day you are going to be reasonable, and will not tell lies, as you did before. All these days you have denied that you had anything to do with the murder of Klausoff, in spite of all the proofs that testify against you. That is foolish. Confession will lighten your guilt. This is the last time I am going to talk to you. If you do not confess to-day, to-morrow it will be too late. Come, tell me all——"

"I know nothing about it. I know nothing about your proofs," answered Psyekoff, almost inaudibly.

"It's no use! Well, let me relate to you how the matter took place. On Saturday evening you were sitting in Klausoff's sleeping room, and drinking vodka and beer with him." (Dukovski fixed his eyes on Psyekoff's face, and kept them there all through the examination.) "Nicholas was waiting on you. At one o'clock, Marcus Ivanovitch announced his intention of going to bed. He always went to bed at one o'clock. When he was taking off his boots, and was giving you directions about details of management, you and Nicholas, at a given signal, seized your drunken master and threw him on the bed. One of you sat on his legs, the other on his head. Then a third person came in from the passage—a woman in a black dress, whom you know well, and who had previously arranged with you as to her share in your criminal deed. She seized a pillow and began to smother him. While the struggle was going on the candle went out. The woman took a box of safety matches from her pocket, and lit the candle. Was it not so? I see by your face that I am speaking the truth. But to go on. After you had smothered him, and saw that he had ceased breathing, you and Nicholas pulled him out through the window and laid him down near the burdock. Fearing that he might come round again, you struck him with something sharp. Then you carried him away, and laid him down under a lilac bush for a short time. After resting awhile and considering, you carried him across the fence. Then you entered the road. After that comes the dam. Near the dam, a peasant frightened you. Well, what is the matter with you?"

"I am suffocating!" replied Psyekoff. "Very well—have it so. Only let me go out, please!"

They led Psyekoff away.

"At last! He has confessed!" cried Chubikoff, stretching himself luxuriously. "He has betrayed himself! And didn't I get round him cleverly! Regularly caught him napping——"

"And he doesn't deny the woman in the black dress!" exulted Dukovski. "But all the same, that safety match is tormenting me frightfully. I can't stand it any longer. Good-by! I am off!"

Dukovski put on his cap and drove off. Chubikoff began to examine Aquilina. Aquilina declared that she knew nothing whatever about it.

At six that evening Dukovski returned. He was more agitated than he had ever been before. His hands trembled so that he could not even unbutton his greatcoat. His cheeks glowed. It was clear that he did not come empty-handed.

"*Veni, vidi, vici!*" he cried, rushing into Chubikoff's room, and falling into an armchair. "I swear to you on my honor, I begin to believe that I am a genius! Listen, devil take us all! It is funny, and it is sad. We have caught three already—isn't that so? Well, I have found the fourth, and a woman at that. You will never believe who it is! But listen. I went to Klausoff's village, and began to make a spiral round it. I visited all the little shops, public houses, dram shops on the road, everywhere asking for safety matches. Everywhere they said they hadn't any. I made a wide round. Twenty times I lost faith, and twenty times I got it back again. I knocked about the whole day, and only an hour ago I got on the track. Three versts from here. They gave me a packet of ten boxes. One box was missing. Immediately: 'Who bought the other box?' 'Such-a-one! She was pleased with them!' Old man! Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! See what a fellow who was expelled from the seminary and who has read Gaboriau can do! From to-day on I begin to respect myself! Oof! Well, come!"

"Come where?"

"To her, to number four! We must hurry, otherwise—otherwise I'll burst with impatience! Do you know who she is? You'll never guess! Olga Petrovna, Marcus Ivanovitch's wife—his own wife—that's who it is! She is the person who bought the matchbox!"

"You—you—you are out of your mind!"

"It's quite simple! To begin with, she smokes. Secondly, she was head and ears in love with Klausoff, even after he refused to live in the same house with her, because she was always scolding his head off. Why, they say she used to beat him because she loved him so much. And then he positively refused to stay in the same house. Love turned sour. 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.' But come along! Quick, or it will be dark. Come!"

"I am not yet sufficiently crazy to go and disturb a respectable honorable woman in the middle of the night for a crazy boy!"

"Respectable, honorable! Do honorable women murder their husbands? After that you are a rag, and not an examining magistrate! I never ventured to call you names before, but now you compel me to. Rag! Dressing-gown! —Dear Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch, do come, I beg of you——!"

The magistrate made a deprecating motion with his hand.

"I beg of you! I ask, not for myself, but in the interests of justice. I beg you! I implore you! Do what I ask you to, just this once!"

Dukovski went down on his knees.

"Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! Be kind! Call me a blackguard, a ne'er-do-weel, if I am mistaken about this woman. You see what an affair it is. What a case it is. A romance! A woman murdering her own husband for love! The fame of it will go all over Russia. They will make you investigator in all important cases. Understand, O foolish old man!"

The magistrate frowned, and undecidedly stretched his hand toward his cap.

"Oh, the devil take you!" he said. "Let us go!"

It was dark when the magistrate's carriage rolled up to the porch of the old country house in which Olga Petrovna had taken refuge with her brother.

"What pigs we are," said Chubikoff, taking hold of the bell, "to disturb a poor woman like this!"

"It's all right! It's all right! Don't get frightened! We can say that we have broken a spring."

Chubikoff and Dukovski were met at the threshold by a tall buxom woman of three and twenty, with pitch-black brows and juicy red lips. It was Olga Petrovna herself, apparently not the least distressed by the recent tragedy.

"Oh, what a pleasant surprise!" she said, smiling broadly. "You are just in time for supper. Kuzma Petrovitch is not at home. He is visiting the priest, and has stayed late. But we'll get on without him! Be seated. You have come from the examination?"

"Yes. We broke a spring, you know," began Chubikoff, entering the sitting room and sinking into an armchair.

"Take her unawares—at once!" whispered Dukovski; "take her unawares!"

"A spring—hum—yes—so we came in."

"Take her unawares, I tell you! She will guess what the matter is if you drag things out like that."

"Well, do it yourself as you want. But let me get out of it," muttered Chubikoff, rising and going to the window.

"Yes, a spring," began Dukovski, going close to Olga Petrovna and wrinkling his long nose. "We did not drive over here—to take supper with you or—to see Kuzma Petrovitch. We came here to ask you, respected madam, where Marcus Ivanovitch is, whom you murdered!"

"What? Marcus Ivanovitch murdered?" stammered Olga Petrovna, and her broad face suddenly and instantaneously flushed bright scarlet. "I don't—understand!"

"I ask you in the name of the law! Where is Klausoff? We know all!"

"Who told you?" Olga Petrovna asked in a low voice, unable to endure Dukovski's glance.

"Be so good as to show us where he is!"

"But how did you find out? Who told you?"

"We know all! I demand it in the name of the law!"

The examining magistrate, emboldened by her confusion, came forward and said:

"Show us, and we will go away. Otherwise, we——"

"What do you want with him?"

"Madam, what is the use of these questions? We ask you to show us! You tremble, you are agitated. Yes, he has been murdered, and, if you must have it, murdered by you! Your accomplices have betrayed you!"

Olga Petrovna grew pale.

"Come!" she said in a low voice, wringing her hands. "I have him—hid—in the bath house! Only for heaven's sake, do not tell Kuzma Petrovitch. I beg and implore you! He will never forgive me!"

Olga Petrovna took down a big key from the wall, and led her guests through the kitchen and passage to the courtyard. The courtyard was in darkness. Fine rain was falling. Olga Petrovna walked in advance of them. Chubikoff and Dukovski strode behind her through the long grass, as the odor of wild hemp and dishwater splashing under their feet reached them. The courtyard was wide. Soon the dishwater ceased, and they felt freshly broken earth under their feet. In the darkness appeared the shadowy outlines of trees, and among the trees a little house with a crooked chimney.

"That is the bath house," said Olga Petrovna. "But I implore you, do not tell my brother! If you do, I'll never hear the end of it!"

Going up to the bath house, Chubikoff and Dukovski saw a huge padlock on the door.

"Get your candle and matches ready," whispered the examining magistrate to his deputy.

Olga Petrovna unfastened the padlock, and let her guests into the bath house. Dukovski struck a match and lit up the anteroom. In the middle of the anteroom stood a table. On the table, beside a sturdy little samovar, stood a soup tureen with cold cabbage soup and a plate with the remnants of some sauce.

"Forward!"

They went into the next room, where the bath was. There was a table there also. On the table was a dish with some ham, a bottle of vodka, plates, knives, forks.

"But where is it—where is the murdered man?" asked the examining magistrate.

"On the top tier," whispered Olga Petrovna, still pale and trembling.

Dukovski took the candle in his hand and climbed up to the top tier of the sweating frame. There he saw a long human body lying motionless on a large feather bed. A slight snore came from the body.

"You are making fun of us, devil take it!" cried Dukovski. "That is not the murdered man! Some live fool is lying here. Here, whoever you are, the devil take you!"

The body drew in a quick breath and stirred. Dukovski stuck his elbow into it. It raised a hand, stretched itself, and lifted its head.

"Who is sneaking in here?" asked a hoarse, heavy bass. "What do you want?"

Dukovski raised the candle to the face of the unknown, and cried out. In the red nose, disheveled, unkempt hair, the pitch-black mustaches, one of which was jauntily twisted and pointed insolently toward the ceiling, he recognized the gallant cavalryman Klausoff.

"You—Marcus—Ivanovitch? Is it possible?"

The examining magistrate glanced sharply up at him, and stood spellbound.

"Yes, it is I. That's you, Dukovski? What the devil do you want here? And who's that other mug down there? Great snakes! It is the examining magistrate! What fate has brought him here?"

Klausoff rushed down and threw his arms round Chubikoff in a cordial embrace. Olga Petrovna slipped through the door.

"How did you come here? Let's have a drink, devil take it! Tra-ta-ti-to-tum—let us drink! But who brought you here? How did you find out that I was here? But it doesn't matter! Let's have a drink!"

Klausoff lit the lamp and poured out three glasses of vodka.

"That is—I don't understand you," said the examining magistrate, running his hands over him. "Is this you or not you!"

"Oh, shut up! You want to preach me a sermon? Don't trouble yourself! Young Dukovski, empty your glass! Friends, let us bring this— What are you looking at? Drink!"

"All the same, I do not understand!" said the examining magistrate, mechanically drinking off the vodka. "What are you here for?"

"Why shouldn't I be here, if I am all right here?"

Klausoff drained his glass and took a bite of ham.

"I am in captivity here, as you see. In solitude, in a cavern, like a ghost or a bogey. Drink! She carried me off and locked me up, and—well, I am living here, in the deserted bath house, like a hermit. I am fed. Next week I think I'll try to get out. I'm tired of it here!"

"Incomprehensible!" said Dukovski.

"What is incomprehensible about it?"

"Incomprehensible! For Heaven's sake, how did your boot get into the garden?"

"What boot?"

"We found one boot in the sleeping room and the other in the garden."

"And what do you want to know that for? It's none of your business! Why don't you drink, devil take you? If you wakened me, then drink with me! It is an interesting tale, brother, that of the boot! I didn't want to go with Olga. I don't like to be bossed. She came under the window and began to abuse me. She always was a termagant. You know what women are like, all of them. I was a bit drunk, so I took a boot and heaved it at her. Ha-ha-ha! Teach her not to scold another time! But it didn't! Not a bit of it! She climbed in at the window, lit the lamp, and began to hammer poor tipsy me. She thrashed me, dragged me over here, and locked me in. She feeds me now—on love, vodka, and ham! But where are you off to, Chubikoff? Where are you going?"

The examining magistrate swore, and left the bath house. Dukovski followed him, crestfallen. They silently took their seats in the carriage and drove off. The road never seemed to them so long and disagreeable as it did that time. Both remained silent. Chubikoff trembled with rage all the way. Dukovski hid his nose in the collar of his overcoat, as if he was afraid that the darkness and the drizzling rain might read the shame in his face.

When they reached home, the examining magistrate found Dr. Tyutyeff awaiting him. The doctor was sitting at the table, and, sighing deeply, was turning over the pages of the *Neva*.

"Such goings-on there are in the world!" he said, meeting the examining magistrate with a sad smile. "Austria is at it again! And Gladstone also to some extent——"

Chubikoff threw his cap under the table, and shook himself.

"Devils' skeletons! Don't plague me! A thousand times I have told you not to bother me with your politics! This is no question of politics! And you," said Chubikoff, turning to Dukovski and shaking his fist, "I won't forget this in a thousand years!"

"But the safety match? How could I know?"

"Choke yourself with your safety match! Get out of my way! Don't make me mad, or the devil only knows what I'll do to you! Don't let me see a trace of you!"

Dukovski sighed, took his hat, and went out.

"I'll go and get drunk," he decided, going through the door, and gloomily wending his way to the public house.

Vsevolod Vladimirovitch Krestovski

Knights of Industry

I

THE LAST WILL OF THE PRINCESS

PRINCESS ANNA CHECHEVINSKI for the last time looked at the home of her girlhood, over which the St. Petersburg twilight was descending. Defying the commands of her mother, the traditions of her family, she had decided to elope with the man of her choice. With a last word of farewell to her maid, she wrapped her cloak round her and disappeared into the darkness.

The maid's fate had been a strange one. In one of the districts beyond the Volga lived a noble, a bachelor, luxuriously, caring only for his own amusement. He fished, hunted, and petted the pretty little daughter of his housekeeper, one of his serfs, whom he vaguely intended to set free. He passed hours playing with the pretty child, and even had an old French governess come to give her lessons. She taught little Natasha to dance, to play the piano, to put on the airs and graces of a little lady. So the years passed, and the old nobleman obeyed the girl's every whim, and his serfs bowed before her and kissed her hands. Gracefully and willfully she queened it over the whole household.

Then one fine day the old noble took thought and died. He had forgotten to liberate his housekeeper and her daughter, and, as he was a bachelor, his estate went to his next of kin, the elder Princess Chechevinski. Between the brother and sister a cordial hatred had existed, and they had not seen one another for years.

Coming to take possession of the estate, Princess Chechevinski carried things with a high hand. She ordered the housekeeper to the cow house, and carried off the girl Natasha, as her daughter's maid, to St. Petersburg, from the first hour letting her feel the lash of her bitter tongue and despotic will. Natasha had tried in vain to dry her mother's tears. With growing anger and sorrow she watched the old house as they drove away, and looking at the old princess she said to herself, "I hate her! I hate her! I will never forgive her!"

Princess Anna, bidding her maid good-by, disappeared into the night. The next morning the old princess learned of the flight. Already ill, she fell fainting to the floor, and for a long time her condition was critical. She regained consciousness, tried to find words to express her anger, and again swooned away. Day and night, three women watched over her, her son's old nurse, her maid, and Natasha, who took turns in waiting on her. Things continued thus for forty-eight hours. Finally, on the night of the third day she came to herself. It was Natasha's watch.

"And you knew? You knew she was going?" the old princess asked her fiercely.

The girl started, unable at first to collect her thoughts, and looked up frightened. The dim flicker of the night light lit her pale face and golden hair, and fell also on the grim, emaciated face of the old princess, whose eyes glittered feverishly under her thick brows.

"You knew my daughter was going to run away?" repeated the old woman, fixing her keen eyes on Natasha's face, trying to raise herself from among the lace-fringed pillows.

"I knew," the girl answered in a half whisper, lowering her eyes in confusion, and trying to throw off her first impression of terror.

"Why did you not tell me before?" the old woman continued, even more fiercely.

Natasha had now recovered her composure, and raising her eyes with an expression of innocent distress, she answered:

"Princess Anna hid everything from me also, until the very last. How dare I tell you? Would you have believed me? It was not my business, your excellency!"

The old princess shook her head, smiling bitterly and incredulously.

"Snake!" she hissed fiercely, looking at the girl; and then she added quickly:

"Did any of the others know?"

"No one but myself!" answered Natasha.

"Never dare to speak of her again! Never dare!" cried the old princess, and once more she sank back unconscious on the pillows.

About noon the next day she again came to herself, and ordered her son to be called. He came in quietly, and affectionately approached his mother.

The princess dismissed her maid, and remained alone with her son.

"You have no longer a sister!" she cried, turning to her son, with the nervous spasm which returned each time she spoke of her daughter. "She is dead for us! She has disgraced us! I curse her! You, you alone are my heir!"

At these words the young prince pricked up his ears and bent even more attentively toward his mother. The news of his sole heirship was so pleasant and unexpected that he did not even think of asking how his sister had disgraced them, and only said with a deep sigh:

"Oh, mamma, she was always opposed to you. She never loved you!"

"I shall make a will in your favor," continued the princess, telling him as briefly as possible of Princess Anna's flight. "Yes, in your favor—only on one condition: that you will never recognize your sister. That is my last wish!"

"Your wish is sacred to me," murmured her son, tenderly kissing her hand. He had always been jealous and envious of his sister, and was besides in immediate need of money.

The princess signed her will that same day, to the no small satisfaction of her dear son, who, in his heart, was wondering how soon his beloved parent would pass away, so that he might get his eyes on her long-hoarded wealth.

II

THE LITHOGRAPHER'S APPRENTICE

Later on the same day, in a little narrow chamber of one of the huge, dirty tenements on Vosnesenski Prospekt, sat a young man of ruddy complexion. He was sitting at a table, bending toward the one dusty window, and attentively examining a white twenty-five ruble note.

The room, dusty and dark, was wretched enough. Two rickety chairs, a torn haircloth sofa, with a greasy pillow, and the bare table at the window, were its entire furniture. Several scattered lithographs, two or three engravings, two slabs of lithographer's stone on the table, and engraver's tools sufficiently showed the occupation of the young man. He was florid, with red hair; of Polish descent, and his name was Kasimir Bodlevski. On the wall, over the sofa, between the overcoat and the cloak hanging on the wall, was a pencil drawing of a young girl. It was the portrait of Natasha.

The young man was so absorbed in his examination of the twenty-five ruble note that when a gentle knock sounded on the door he started nervously, as if coming back to himself, and even grew pale, and hurriedly crushed the banknote into his pocket.

The knock was repeated—and this time Bodlevski's face lit up. It was evidently a well-known and expected knock, for he sprang up and opened the door with a welcoming smile.

Natasha entered the room.

"What were you dreaming about that you didn't open the door for me?" she asked caressingly, throwing aside her hat and cloak, and taking a seat on the tumble-down sofa. "What were you busy at?"

"You know, yourself."

And instead of explaining further, he drew the banknote from his pocket and showed it to Natasha.

"This morning the master paid me, and I am keeping the money," he continued in a low voice, tilting back his chair. "I pay neither for my rooms nor my shop, but sit here and study all the time."

"It's so well worth while, isn't it?" smiled Natasha with a contemptuous grimace.

"You don't think it is worth while?" said the young man. "Wait! I'll learn. We'll be rich!"

"Yes, if we aren't sent to Siberia!" the girl laughed. "What kind of wealth is that?" she went on. "The game is not worth the candle. I'll be rich before you are."

"All right, go ahead!"

"Go ahead? I didn't come to talk nonsense, I came on business. You help me, and, on my word of honor, we'll be in clover!"

Bodlevski looked at his companion in astonishment.

"I told you my Princess Anna was going to run away. She's gone! And her mother has cut her off from the inheritance," Natasha continued with an exultant smile. "I looked through the scrap basket, and have brought some papers with me."

"What sort of papers?"

"Oh, letters and notes. They are all in Princess Anna's handwriting. Shall I give them to you?" jested Natasha. "Have a good look at them, examine them, learn her handwriting, so that you can imitate every letter. That kind of thing is just in your line; you are a first-class copyist, so this is just the job for you."

The engraver listened, and only shrugged his shoulders.

"No, joking aside," she continued seriously, drawing nearer Bodlevski, "I have thought of something out of the common; you will be grateful. I have no time to explain it all now. You will know later on. The main thing is—learn her handwriting."

"But what is it all for?" said Bodlevski wonderingly.

"So that you may be able to write a few words in the handwriting of Princess Anna; what you have to write I'll dictate to you."

"And then?"

"Then hurry up and get me a passport in some one else's name, and have your own ready. But learn her handwriting. Everything depends on that!"

"It won't be easy. I'll hardly be able to!" muttered Bodlevski, scratching his head.

Natasha flared up.

"You say you love me?" she cried energetically, with a glance of anger. "Well, then, do it. Unless you are telling lies, you can learn to do banknotes."

The young man strode up and down his den, perplexed.

"How soon do you want it?" he asked, after a minute's thought. "In a couple of days?"

"Yes, in about two days, not longer, or the whole thing is done for!" the girl replied decisively. "In two days I'll come for the writing, and be sure my passport is ready!"

"Very well. I'll do it," consented Bodlevski. And Natasha began to dictate to him the wording of the letter.

As soon as she was gone the engraver got to work. All the evening and a great part of the night he bent over the papers she had brought, examining the handwriting, studying the letters, and practicing every stroke with the utmost care, copying and repeating it a hundred times, until at last he had reached the required clearness. At last he mastered the writing. It only remained to give it the needed lightness and naturalness. His head rang from the concentration of blood in his temples, but he still worked on.

Finally, when it was almost morning, the note was written, and the name of Princess Anna was signed to it. The work was a masterpiece, and even exceeded Bodlevski's expectations. Its lightness and clearness were remarkable. The engraver, examining the writing of Princess Anna, compared it with his own work, and was astonished, so perfect was the resemblance.

And long he admired his handiwork, with the parental pride known to every creator, and as he looked at this note he for the first time fully realized that he was an artist.

III

THE CAVE

"HALF the work is done!" he cried, jumping from the tumble-down sofa. "But the passport? There's where the shoe pinches," continued the engraver, remembering the second half of Natasha's commission. "The passport—yes—that's where the shoe pinches!" he muttered to himself in perplexity, resting his head on his hands and his elbows on his knees. Thinking over all kinds of possible and impossible plans, he suddenly remembered a fellow countryman of his, a shoemaker named Yuzitch, who had once confessed in a moment of intoxication that "he would rather hook a watch than patch a shoe." Bodlevski remembered that three months before he had met Yuzitch in the street, and they had gone together to a wine shop, where, over a bottle generously ordered by Yuzitch, Bodlevski had lamented over the hardships of mankind in general, and his own in particular. He had not taken advantage of Yuzitch's offer to introduce him to "the gang," only because he had already determined to take up one of the higher branches of the "profession," namely, to metamorphose white paper into banknotes. When they were parting, Yuzitch had warmly wrung his hand, saying:

"Whenever you want anything, dear friend, or if you just want to see me, come to the Cave; come to Razyeziy Street and ask for the Cave, and at the Cave anyone will show you where to find Yuzitch. If the barkeeper makes difficulties just whisper to him that 'Secret' sent you, and he'll show you at once."

As this memory suddenly flashed into his mind, Bodlevski caught up his hat and coat and hurried downstairs into the street. Making his way through the narrow, dirty streets to the Five Points, he stopped perplexed. Happily he noticed a sleepy watchman leaning leisurely against a wall, and going up to him he said:

"Tell me, where is the Cave?"

"The what?" asked the watchman impatiently.

"The Cave."

"The Cave? There is no such place!" he replied, looking suspiciously at Bodlevski.

Bodlevski put his hand in his pocket and pulled out some small change: "If you tell me——"

The watchman brightened up. "Why didn't you say so before?" he asked, grinning. "You see that house, the second from the corner? The wooden one? That's the Cave."

Bodlevski crossed the street in the direction indicated, and looked for the sign over the door. To his astonishment he did not find it and only later he knew that the name was strictly "unofficial," only used by members of "the gang."

Opening the door cautiously, Bodlevski made his way into the low, dirty barroom. Behind the bar stood a tall, handsome man with an open countenance and a bald head. Politely bowing to Bodlevski, with his eyes rather than his head, he invited him to enter the inner room. But Bodlevski explained that he wanted, not the inner room, but his friend Yuzitch.

"Yuzitch?" said the barkeeper thoughtfully. "We don't know anyone of that name."

"Why, he's here all the time," cried Bodlevski, in astonishment.

"Don't know him," retorted the barkeeper imperturbably.

"'Secret' sent me!" Bodlevski suddenly exclaimed, without lowering his voice.

The barkeeper looked at him sharply and suspiciously, and then asked, with a smile:

"Who did you say?"

"'Secret,'" repeated Bodlevski.

After a while the barkeeper said, "And did your—friend make an appointment?"

"Yes, an appointment!" Bodlevski replied, beginning to lose patience.

"Well, take a seat in the inner room," again said the barkeeper slyly. "Perhaps your friend will come in, or perhaps he is there already."

Bodlevski made his way into a roomy saloon, with five windows with faded red curtains. The ceiling was black from the smoke of hanging lamps; little square tables were dotted about the floor; their covers were coarse and not above reproach on the score of cleanliness. The air was pungent with the odor of cheap tobacco and cheaper cigars. On the walls were faded oleographs of generals and archbishops, flyblown and stained.

Bodlevski, little as he was used to refined surroundings, found his gorge rising. At some of the little tables furtive, impudent, tattered, sleek men were drinking.

Presently Yuzitch made his appearance from a low door at the other end of the room. The meeting of the two friends was cordial, especially on Bodlevski's side. Presently they were seated at a table, with a flask of wine between them, and Bodlevski began to explain what he wanted to his friend.

As soon as he heard what was wanted, Yuzitch took on an air of importance, knit his brows, hemmed, and hawed.

"I can manage it," he said finally. "Yes, we can manage it. I must see one of my friends about it. But it's difficult. It will cost money."

Bodlevski immediately assented. Yuzitch at once rose and went over to a red-nosed individual in undress uniform, who was poring over the *Police News*.

"Friend Borisovitch," said Yuzitch, holding out his hand to him, "something doing!"

"Fair or foul?" asked the man with the red nose.

"Hang your cheek!" laughed Yuzitch; "if I say it, of course it's fair." After a whispered conference, Yuzitch returned to Bodlevski and told him that it was all right; that the passport for Natasha would be ready by the next evening. Bodlevski paid him something in advance and went home triumphantly.

At eleven o'clock the next evening Bodlevski once more entered the large room at the Cave, now all lit up and full of an animated crowd of men and women, all with the same furtive, predatory faces. Bodlevski felt nervous. He had no fears while turning white paper into banknotes in the seclusion of his own workshop, but he was full of apprehensions concerning his present guest, because several people had to be let into the secret.

Yuzitch presently appeared through the same low door and, coming up to Bodlevski, explained that the passport would cost twenty rubles. Bodlevski paid the money over in advance, and Yuzitch led him into a back room. On the table burned a tallow candle, which hardly lit up the faces of seven people who were grouped round it, one of them being the red-nosed man who was reading the *Police News*. The seven men were all from the districts of Vilna and Vitebsk, and were specialists in the art of fabricating passports.

The red-nosed man approached Bodlevski: "We must get acquainted with each other," he said amiably. "I have the honor to present myself!" and he bowed low; "Former District Secretary Pacomius Borisovitch Prakkin. Let me request you first of all to order some vodka; my hand shakes, you know," he added apologetically. "I don't want it so much for myself as for my hand—to steady it."

Bodlevski gave him some change, which the red-nosed man put in his pocket and at once went to the sideboard for a flask of vodka which he had already bought. "Let us give thanks! And now to business!" he said, smacking his lips after a glass of vodka.

A big, red-haired man, one of the group of seven, drew from his pocket two vials. In one was a sticky black fluid; in the other, something as clear as water.

"We are chemists, you see," the red-nosed man explained to Bodlevski with a grin, and then added:

"Finch! on guard!"

A young man, who had been lolling on a couch in the corner, rose and took up a position outside the door.

"Now, brothers, close up!" cried the red-nosed man, and all stood in close order, elbow to elbow, round the table. "And now we take a newspaper and have it handy on the table! That is in case," he explained to Bodlevski, "any outsider happened in on us—which Heaven prevent! We aren't up to anything at all; simply reading the political news! You catch on?"

"How could I help catching on?"

"Very well. And now let us make everything as clear as in a looking-glass. What class do you wish to make the person belong to? The commercial or the nobility?"

"I think the nobility would be best," said Bodlevski.

"Certainly! At least that will give the right of free passage through all the towns and districts of the Russian Empire. Let us see. Have we not something that will suit?"

And Pacomius Borisovitch, opening his portfolio, filled with all kinds of passports, certificates, and papers of identification, began to turn them over, but without taking any out of the portfolio. All with the same thought—that some stranger might come in.

"Ha! here's a new one! Where did it come from?" he cried.

"I got it out of a new arrival," muttered the red-headed man.

"Well done! Just what we want! And a noble's passport, too! It is evident that Heaven is helping us. See what a blessing brings!

"'This passport is issued by the District of Yaroslav,'" he continued reading, "'to the college assessor's widow, Maria Solontseva, with permission to travel,'" and so on in due form. "Did you get it here?" he added, turning to the red-headed man.

"Came from Moscow!"

"Pinched?"

"Knocked on the head!" briefly replied the red-headed man.

"Knocked on the head?" repeated Pacomius Borisovitch. "Serious business. Comes under sections 332 and 727 of the Penal Code."

"Driveling again!" cried the red-headed man. "I'll teach you to talk about the Penal Code!" and rising deliberately, he dealt Pacomius Borisovitch a well-directed blow on the head, which sent him rolling into the corner. Pacomius picked himself up, blinking with indignation.

"What is the meaning of such conduct?" he asked loftily.

"It means," said the red-headed man, "that if you mention the Penal Code again I'll knock your head off!"

"Brothers, brothers!" cried Yuzitch in a good-humored tone; "we are losing precious time! Forgive him!" he added, turning to Pacomius. "You must forgive him!"

"I—forgive him," answered Pacomius, but the light in his eye showed that he was deeply offended.

"Well," he went on, addressing Bodlevski, "will it suit you to have the person pass as Maria Solontseva, widow of a college assessor?"

IV

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GOLDEN BAND

Bodlevski had not time to nod his head in assent, when suddenly the outer door was pushed quickly open and a tall man, well built and fair-haired, stepped swiftly into the room. He wore a military uniform and gold-rimmed eyeglasses.

The company turned their faces toward him in startled surprise, but no one moved. All continued to stand in close order round the table.

"Health to you, eaglets! honorable men of Vilna! What are you up to? What are you busy at?" cried the newcomer, swiftly approaching the table and taking the chair that Pacomius Borisovitch had just been knocked out of.

"What is all this?" he continued, with one hand seizing the vial of colorless liquid and with the other the photograph of the college assessor's widow. "So this is hydrochloric acid for erasing ink? Very good! And this is a photo! So we are fabricating passports? Very fine! Business is business! Hey! Witnesses!"

And the fair-haired man whistled sharply. From the outer door appeared two faces, set on shoulders of formidable proportions.

The red-headed man silently went up to the newcomer and fiercely seized him by the collar. At the same moment the rest seized chairs or logs or bars to defend themselves.

The fair-haired man meanwhile, not in the least changing his expression of cool self-confidence, quickly slipped his hands into his pockets and pulled out a pair of small double-barreled pistols. In the profound silence in which this scene took place they could distinctly hear the click of the hammers as he cocked them. He raised his right hand and pointed the muzzle at the breast of his opponent.

The red-headed man let go his collar, and glancing contemptuously at him, with an expression of hate and wrath, silently stepped aside.

"How much must we pay?" he asked sullenly.

"Oho! that's better. You should have begun by asking that!" answered the newcomer, settling himself comfortably on his chair and toying with his pistols. "How much do you earn?"

"We get little enough! Just five rubles," answered the red-headed man.

"That's too little. I need a great deal more. But you are lying, brother! You would not stir for less than twenty rubles!"

"Thanks for the compliment!" interrupted Pacomius Borisovitch.

The fair-haired man nodded to him satirically. "I need a lot more," he repeated firmly and impressively; "and if you don't give me at least twenty-five rubles I'll denounce you this very minute to the police—and you see I have my witnesses ready."

"Sergei Antonitch! Mr. Kovroff! Have mercy on us! Where can we get so much from? I tell you as in the presence of the Creator! There are ten of us, as you see. And there are three of you. And I, Yuzitch, and Gretcka deserve double shares!" added Pacomius Borisovitch persuasively.

"Gretcka deserves nothing at all for catching me by the throat," decided Sergei Antonitch Kovroff.

"Mr. Kovroff!" began Pacomius again. "You and I are gentlemen——"

"What! What did you say?" Kovroff contemptuously interrupted him. "You put yourself on my level? Ha! ha! ha! No, brother; I am still in the Czar's service and wear my honor with my uniform! I, brother, have never stained myself with theft or crime, Heaven be praised. But what are you?"

"Hm! And the Golden Band? Who is its captain?" muttered Gretcka angrily, half to himself.

"Who is its captain? I am—I, Lieutenant Sergei Antonitch Kovroff, of the Chernovarski Dragoons! Do you hear? I am captain of the Golden Band," he said proudly and haughtily, scrutinizing the company with his confident gaze. "And you haven't yet got as far as the Golden Band, because you are *cowards*! Chuproff," he cried to one of his men, "go and take the mask off Finch, or the poor boy will suffocate, and untie his arms—and give him a good crack on the head to teach him to keep watch better."

The " mask " that Kovroff employed on such occasions was nothing but a piece of oilcloth cut the size of a person's face, and smeared on one side with a thick paste. Kovroff's " boys " employed this " instrument " with wonderful dexterity; one of them generally stole up behind the unconscious victim and skillfully slapped the mask in his face; the victim at once became dumb and blind, and panted from lack of breath; at the same time, if necessary, his hands were tied behind him and he was leisurely robbed, or held, as the case might be.

The Golden Band was formed in the middle of the thirties, when the first Nicholas had been about ten years on the throne. Its first founders were three Polish nobles. It was never distinguished by the number of its members, but everyone of them could honestly call himself an accomplished knave, never stopping at anything that stood in the way of a " job." The present head of the band was Lieutenant Kovroff, who was a thorough-paced rascal, in the full sense of the word. Daring, brave, self-confident, he also possessed a handsome presence, good manners, and the worldly finish known as education. Before the members of the Golden Band, and especially before Kovroff, the small rascals stood in fear and trembling. He had his secret agents everywhere, following every move of the crooks quietly but pertinaciously. At the moment when some big job was being pulled off, Kovroff suddenly appeared unexpectedly, with some of his " boys," and demanded a contribution, threatening instantly to inform the police if he did not get it—and the rogues, in order to " keep him quiet," had to give him whatever share of their plunder he graciously deigned to indicate. Acting with extraordinary skill and acumen in all his undertakings he always managed so that not a shadow of suspicion could fall on himself and so he got a double share of the plunder: robbing the honest folk and the rogues at the same time. Kovroff escaped the contempt of the crooks because he did things on such a big scale and embarked with his Golden Band on the most desperate and dangerous enterprises that the rest of roguedom did not even dare to consider.

The rogues, whatever their rank, have a great respect for daring, skill, and force—and therefore they respected Kovroff, at the same time fearing and detesting him.

"Who are you getting that passport for?" he asked, calmly taking the paper from the table and slipping it into his pocket. Gretcka nodded toward Bodlevski.

"Aha! for you, is it? Very glad to hear it!" said Kovroff, measuring him with his eyes. "And so, gentlemen, twenty-five rubles, or good-by—to our happy meeting in the police court!"

"Mr. Kovroff! Allow me to speak to you as a man of honor!" Pacomius Borisovitch again interrupted. "We are only getting twenty rubles for the job. The whole gang will pledge their words of honor to that. Do you think we would lie to you and stain the honor of the gang for twenty measly rubles?"

"That is business. That was well said. I love a good speech, and am always ready to respect it," remarked Sergei Antonitch approvingly.

"Very well, then, see for yourself," went on the red-nosed Pacomius, "see for yourself. If we give you everything, we are doing our work and not getting a kopeck!"

"Let him pay," answered Kovroff, turning his eyes toward Bodlevski.

Bodlevski took out his gold watch, his only inheritance from his father, and laid it down on the table before Kovroff, with the five rubles that remained.

Kovroff again measured him with his eyes and smiled.

"You are a worthy young man!" he said. "Give me your hand! I see that you will go far."

And he warmly pressed the engraver's hand. "But you must know for the future," he added in a friendly but impressive way, "that I never take anything but money when I am dealing with these fellows. Ho, you!" he went on, turning to the company, " some one go to uncle's and get cash for this watch; tell him to pay conscientiously at least two thirds of what it is worth; it is a good watch. It would cost sixty rubles to buy. And have a bottle of champagne got ready for me at the bar, quick! And if you don't, it will be the worse for you!" he called after the departing Yuzitch, who came back a few minutes later, and gave Kovroff forty rubles. Kovroff counted them, and put twenty in his pocket, returning the remainder in silence, but with a gentlemanly smile, to Bodlevski.

" Fair exchange is no robbery," he said, giving Bodlevski the passport of the college assessor's widow. " Now that old rascal Pacomius may get to work."

" What is there to do?" laughed Pacomius; " the passport will do very well. So let us have a little glass, and then a little game of cards."

" We are going to know each other better; I like your face, so I hope we shall make friends," said Kovroff, again shaking hands with Bodlevski. " Now let us go and have some wine. You will tell me over our glasses what you want the passport for, and on account of your frankness about the watch, I am well disposed to you. Lieutenant Sergei Kovroff gives you his word of honor on that. I also can be magnanimous," he concluded, and the new friends accompanied by the whole gang went out to the large hall.

There began a scene of revelry that lasted till long after midnight. Bodlevski, feeling his side pocket to see if the passport was still there, at last left the hall, bewildered, as though under a spell. He felt a kind of gloomy satisfaction; he was possessed by this satisfaction, by the uncertainty of what Natasha could have thought out, by the question how it would all turn out, and by the conviction that his first crime had already been committed. All these feelings lay like lead on his heart, while in his ears resounded the wild songs of the Cave.

V

THE KEYS OF THE OLD PRINCESS

It was nine o'clock in the evening. Natasha lit the night lamp in the bedroom of the old Princess Chechevinski, and went silently into the dressing room to prepare the soothing powders which the doctors had prescribed for her, before going to sleep.

The old princess was still very weak. Although her periods of unconsciousness had not returned, she was still subject to paroxysms of hysteria. At times she sank into forgetfulness, then started nervously, sometimes trembling in every limb. The thought of the blow of her daughter's flight never left her for a moment.

Natasha had just taken the place of the day nurse. It was her turn to wait on the patient until midnight. Silence always reigned in the house of the princess, and now that she was ill the silence was intensified tenfold. Everyone walked on tiptoe, and spoke in whispers, afraid even of coughing or of clinking a teaspoon on the sideboard. The doorbells were tied in towels, and the whole street in front of the house was thickly strewn with straw. At ten the household was already dispersed, and preparing for sleep. Only the nurse sat silently at the head of the old lady's bed.

Pouring out half a glass of water, Natasha sprinkled the powder in it, and took from the medicine chest a phial with a yellowish liquid. It was chloral. Looking carefully round, she slowly brought the lip of the phial down to the edge of the glass and let ten drops fall into it. "That will be enough," she said to herself, and smiled. Her face, as always, was coldly quiet, and not the slightest shade of any feeling was visible on it at that moment.

Natasha propped the old lady up with her arm. She drank the medicine given to her and lay down again, and in a few minutes the chloral began to have its effect. With an occasional convulsive movement of her lower lip, she sank into a deep and heavy sleep. Natasha watched her face following the symptoms of unconsciousness, and when she was convinced that sleep had finally taken complete possession of her, and that for several hours the old woman was deprived of the power to hear anything or to wake up, she slowly moved her chair nearer the bedstead, and without taking her quietly observant eyes from the old woman's face, softly slipped her hand under the lower pillow. Moving forward with the utmost care, not more than an inch or so at a time, her hand stopped instantly, as soon as there was the slightest nervous movement of the old woman's face, on which Natasha's eyes were fixed immovably. But the old woman slept profoundly, and the hand again moved forward half an inch or so under the pillow. About half an hour passed, and the girl's eyes were still fastened on the sleeping face, and her hand was still slipping forward under the pillow, moving occasionally a little to one side, and feeling about for something. Natasha's expression was in the highest degree quiet and concentrated, but under this quietness was at the same time concealed something else, which gave the impression that if —which Heaven forbid!—the old woman should at that moment awake, the other free hand would instantly seize her by the throat.

At last the finger-ends felt something hard. "That is it!" thought Natasha, and she held her breath. In a moment, seizing its treasure, her hand began quietly to withdraw. Ten minutes more passed, and Natasha finally drew out a little bag of various colored silks, in which the old princess always kept her keys, and from which she never parted, carrying it by day in her pocket, and by night keeping it under her pillow. One of the keys was an ordinary one, that of her wardrobe. The other was smaller and finely made; it was the key of her strong box.

About an hour later, the same keys, in the same order, and with the same precautions, found their way back to their accustomed place under the old lady's pillow.

Natasha carefully wiped the glass with her handkerchief, in order that not the least odor of chloral might remain in it, and with her usual stillness sat out the remaining hours of her watch.

VI

REVENGED

THE old princess awoke at one o'clock the next day. The doctor was very pleased at her long and sound sleep, the like of which the old lady had not enjoyed since her first collapse, and which, in his view, was certain to presage a turn for the better.

The princess had long ago formed a habit of looking over her financial documents, and verifying the accounts of income and expenditure. This deep-seated habit, which had become a second nature, did not leave her, now she was ill; at any rate, every morning, as soon as consciousness and tranquillity returned to her, she took out the key of her wardrobe, ordered the strong box to be brought to her, and, sending the day nurse out of the room, gave herself up in solitude to her beloved occupation, which had by this time become something like a childish amusement. She drew out her bank securities, signed and unsigned, now admiring the colored engravings on them, now sorting and rearranging them, fingering the packets to feel their thickness, counting them over, and several thousands in banknotes, kept in the house in case of need, and finally carefully replaced them in the strong box. The girl, recalled to the bedroom by the sound of the bell, restored the strong box to its former place, and the old princess, after this amusement, felt herself for some time quiet and happy.

The nurses had had the opportunity to get pretty well used to this foible; so that the daily examination of the strong box seemed to them a part of the order of things, something consecrated by custom.

After taking her medicine, and having her hands and face wiped with a towel moistened with toilet water, the princess ordered certain prayers to be read out to her, or the chapter of the Gospel appointed for the day, and then received her son. From the time of her illness—that is, from the day when she signed the will making him her sole heir—he had laid it on himself as a not altogether pleasant duty to put in an appearance for five minutes in his mother's room, where he showed himself a dutiful son by never mentioning his sister, but asking tenderly after his mother's health, and finally, with a deep sigh, gently kissing her hand, taking his departure forthwith, to sup with some actress or to meet his companions in a wine shop.

When he soon went away, the old lady, as was her habit, ordered her strong box to be brought, and sent the nurse out of the room. It was a very handsome box of ebony, with beautiful inlaid work.

The key clicked in the lock, the spring lid sprang up, and the eyes of the old princess became set in their sockets, full of bewilderment and terror. Twenty-four thousand rubles in bills, which she herself with her own hands had yesterday laid on the top of the other securities, were no longer in the strong box. All the unsigned bank securities were also gone. The securities in the name of her daughter Anna had likewise disappeared. There remained only the signed securities in the name of the old princess and her son, and a few shares of stock. In the place of all that was gone, there lay a note directed "to Princess Chechevinski."

The old lady's fingers trembled so that for a long time she could not unfold this paper. Her staring eyes wandered hither and thither as if she had lost her senses. At last she managed somehow to unfold the note, and began to read:

"You cursed me, forced me to flee, and unjustly deprived me of my inheritance. I am taking my money by force. You may inform the police, but when you read this note, I myself and he who carried out this act by my directions, will have left St. Petersburg forever.

"Your daughter,
"PRINCESS ANNA CHECHEVINSKI."

The old lady's hands did not fall at her sides, but shifted about on her lap as if they did not belong to her. Her wandering, senseless eyes stopped their movements, and in them suddenly appeared an expression of deep meaning. The old princess made a terrible, superhuman effort to recover her presence of mind and regain command over herself. A single faint groan broke from her breast, and her teeth chattered. She began to look about the room for a light, but the lamp had been extinguished; the dull gray daylight filtering through the Venetian blinds sufficiently lit the room. Then the old lady, with a strange, irregular movement, crushed the note together in her hand, placed it in her mouth, and with a convulsive movement of her jaws chewed it, trying to swallow it as quickly as possible.

A minute passed, and the note had disappeared. The old princess closed the strong box and rang for the day nurse. Giving her the usual order in a quiet voice, she had still strength enough to support herself on her elbow and watch the nurse closing the wardrobe, and then to put the little bag with the keys back under her pillow, in its accustomed place. Then she again ordered the nurse to go.

When, two hours later, the doctor, coming for the third time, wished to see his patient and entered her bedroom, he found only the old woman's lifeless body. The blow had been too much—the daughter of the ancient and ever honorable line of Checnevinski a fugitive and a thief!

Natasha had had her revenge.

VII

BEYOND THE FRONTIER

On the morning of that same day, at nine o'clock, a well-dressed lady presented at the Bank of Commerce a number of unsigned bank shares. At the same time a young man, also elegantly dressed, presented a series of signed shares, made out in the name of " Princess Anna Chechevinski." They were properly indorsed, the signature corresponding to that in the bank books.

After a short interval the cashier of the bank paid over to the well-dressed lady a hundred and fifty thousand rubles in bills, and to the elegantly dressed young man seventy thousand rubles. The lady signed her receipt in French, Teresa Doré; the young man signed his name, Ivan Afonasieff, son of a merchant of Kostroma.

A little later on the same day—namely, about two o'clock—a light carriage carried two passengers along the Pargoloff road: a quietly dressed young woman and a quietly dressed young man. Toward evening these same young people were traveling in a Finnish coach by the stony mountain road in the direction of Abo.

Four days later the old Princesss Chechevinski was buried in the Nevski monastery.

On his return from the monastery, young Prince Chechevinski went straight for the strong box, which he had hitherto seen only at a distance, and even then only rarely. He expected to find a great deal more money in it than he found—some hundred and fifty thousand rubles; a hundred thousand in his late mother's name, and fifty thousand in his own. This was the personal property of the old princess, a part of her dowry. The young prince made a wry face—the money might last him two or three years, not more. During the lifetime of the old princess no one had known accurately how much she possessed, so that it never even entered the young prince's head to ask whether she had not had more. He was so unmethodical that he never even looked into her account book, deciding that it was uninteresting and not worth while.

That same day the janitor of one of the huge, dirty tenements in Vosnesenski Prospekt brought to the police office notice of the fact that the Pole, Kasimir Bodlevski, had left the city; and the housekeeper of the late Princess Chechevinski informed the police that the serf girl Natalia Pavlovna (Natasha) had disappeared without leaving a trace, which the housekeeper now announced, as the three days' limit had elapsed.

At that same hour the little ship of a certain Finnish captain was gliding down the Gulf of Bothnia. The Finn stood at the helm and his young son handled the sails. On the deck sat a young man and a young woman. The young woman carried, in a little bag hung round her neck, two hundred and forty-four thousand rubles in bills, and she and her companion carried pistols in their pockets for use in case of need. Their passports declared that the young woman belonged to the noble class, and was the widow of a college assessor, her name being Maria Solontseva, while the young man was a Pole, Kasimir Bodlevski.

The little ship was crossing the Gulf of Bothnia toward the coast of Sweden.

VIII

BACK TO RUSSIA

In the year 1858, in the month of September, the "Report of the St. Petersburg City Police" among the names of "Arrivals" included the following:

Baroness von Döring, Hanoverian subject.
Ian Vladislav Karozitch, Austrian subject.

The persons above described might have been recognized among the fashionable crowds which thronged the St. Petersburg terminus of the Warsaw railway a few days before: A lady who looked not more than thirty, though she was really thirty-eight, dressed with simple elegance, tall and slender, admirably developed, with beautifully clear complexion, piercing, intelligent gray eyes, under finely outlined brows, thick chestnut hair, and a firm mouth—almost a beauty, and with an expression of power, subtlety and decision. "She is either a queen or a criminal," a physiognomist would have said after observing her face. A gentleman with a red beard, whom the lady addressed as "brother," not less elegantly dressed, and with the same expression of subtlety and decision. They left the station in a hired carriage, and drove to Demuth's Hotel.

Before narrating the adventures of these distinguished persons, let us go back twenty years, and ask what became of Natasha and Bodlevski. When last we saw them the ship that carried them away from Russia was gliding across the Gulf of Bothnia toward the Swedish coast. Late in the evening it slipped into the port of Stockholm, and the worthy Finn, winding in and out among the heavy hulls in the harbor—he was well used to the job—landed his passengers on the wharf at a lonely spot near a lonely inn, where the customs officers rarely showed their noses. Bodlevski, who had beforehand got ready the very modest sum to pay for their passage, with pitiable looks and gestures and the few Russian phrases the good Finn could understand, assured him that he was a very poor man, and could not even pay the sum agreed on in full. The deficit was inconsiderable, some two rubles in all, and the good Finn was magnanimous; he slapped his passenger on the shoulder, called him a "good comrade," declared that he would not press a poor man, and would always be ready to do him a service. He even found quarters for Bodlevski and Natasha in the inn, under his protection. The Finn was indeed a very honest smuggler. On the next morning, bidding a final farewell to their nautical friend, our couple made their way to the office of the British Consul, and asked for an opportunity to speak with him. At this point Natasha played the principal rôle.

"My husband is a Pole," said the handsome girl, taking a seat opposite the consul in his private office, "and I myself am Russian on the father's side, but my mother was English. My husband is involved in a political enterprise; he was liable to transportation to Siberia, but a chance made it possible for us to escape while the police were on their way to arrest him. We are now political fugitives, and we intrust our lives to the protection of English law. Be generous, protect us, and send us to England!"

The ruse, skillfully planned and admirably presented, was completely successful, and two or three days later the first passenger ship under the English flag carried the happy couple to London.

Bodlevski destroyed his own passport and that of the college assessor's widow, Maria Solontseva, which Natasha had needed as a precaution while still on Russian soil. When they got to England, it would be much handier to take new names. But with their new position and these new names a great difficulty presented itself: they could find no suitable outlet for their capital without arousing very dangerous suspicions. The many-sided art of the London rogues is known to all the world; in their club, Bodlevski, who had lost no time in making certain pleasant and indispensable acquaintances there, soon succeeded in getting for himself and Natasha admirably counterfeited new passports, once more with new names and occupations. With these, in a short time, they found their way to the Continent. They both felt the full force of youth and a passionate desire to live and enjoy life; in their hot heads hummed many a golden hope and plan; they wished, to begin with, to invest their main capital somewhere, and then to travel over Europe, and to choose a quiet corner somewhere where they could settle down to a happy life.

Perhaps all this might have happened if it had not been for cards and roulette and the perpetual desire of increasing their capital—for the worthy couple fell into the hands of a talented company, whose agents robbed them at Frascati's in Paris, and again in Hamburg and various health resorts, so that hardly a year had passed when Bodlevski one fine night woke up to the fact that they no longer possessed a ruble. But they had passed a brilliant year, their arrival in the great cities had had its effect, and especially since Natasha had become a person of title; in the course of the year she succeeded in purchasing an Austrian barony at a very reasonable figure—a barony which, of course, only existed on paper.

When all his money was gone, there was nothing left for Bodlevski but to enroll himself a member of the company which had so successfully accomplished the transfer of his funds to their own pockets. Natasha's beauty and Bodlevski's brains were such strong arguments that the company willingly accepted them as new recruits. The two paid dear for their knowledge, it is true, but their knowledge presently began to bear fruit in considerable abundance. Day followed day, and year succeeded year, a long series of horribly anxious nights, violent feelings, mental perturbations, crafty and subtle schemes, a complete cycle of rascalities, an entire science of covering up tracks, and the perpetual shadow of justice, prison, and perhaps the scaffold. Bodlevski, with his obstinate, persistent, and concentrated character, reached the highest skill in card-sharping and the allied wiles. All games of "chance" were for him games of skill. At thirty he looked at least ten years older. The life he led, with its ceaseless effort, endless mental work, perpetual anxiety, had made of him a fanatical worshiper at the shrine of trickery. He dried up visibly in body and grew old in mind, mastering all the difficult arts of his profession, and only gained confidence and serenity when he had reached the highest possible skill in every branch of his "work." From that moment he took a new lease of life; he grew younger, he became gay and self-confident, his health even visibly improved, and he assumed the air and manner of a perfect gentleman.

As for Natasha, her life and efforts in concert with Bodlevski by no means had the same wearing effect on her as on him. Her proud, decided nature received all these impressions quite differently. She continued to blossom out, to grow handsomer, to enjoy life, to take hearts captive. All the events which aroused so keen a mental struggle in her companion she met with entire equanimity. The reason was this: When she made up her mind to anything, she always decided at once and with unusual completeness; a very short time given to keen and accurate consideration, a rapid weighing of the gains and losses of the matter in hand, and then she went forward coldly and unswervingly on her chosen path. Her first aim in life had been revenge, then a brilliant and luxurious life—and she knew that they would cost dear. Therefore, once embarked on her undertaking, Natasha remained calm and indifferent, brilliantly distinguished, and ensnaring the just and the unjust alike. Her intellect, education, skill, resource, and innate tact made it possible for her everywhere to gain a footing in select aristocratic society, and to play by no means the least rôle there. Many beauties envied her, detested her, spoke evil of her, and yet sought her friendship, because she almost always queened it in society. Her friendship and sympathy always seemed so cordial, so sincere and tender, and her epigrams were so pointed and poisonous, that every hostile criticism seemed to shrivel up in that glittering fire, and there seemed to be nothing left but to seek her friendship and good will. For instance, if things went well in Baden, one could confidently foretell that at the end of the summer season Natasha would be found in Nice or Geneva, queen of the winter season, the lioness of the day, and the arbiter of fashion. She and Bodlevski always behaved with such propriety and watchful care that not a shadow ever fell on Natasha's fame. It is true that Bodlevski had to change his name once or twice and to seek a new field for his talents, and to make sudden excursions to distant corners of Europe—sometimes in pursuit of a promising "job," sometimes to evade the too persistent attentions of the police. So far everything had turned out favorably, and his name "had remained unstained," when suddenly a slight mishap befell. The matter was a trifling one, but the misfortune was that it happened in Paris. There was a chance that it might find issue in the courts and the hulks, so that there ensued a more than ordinarily rapid change of passports and a new excursion—this time to Russia, back to their native land again, after an absence of twenty years. Thus it happened that the papers announced the arrival in St. Petersburg of Baroness von Döring and Ian Vladislav Karozitch.

IX

THE CONCERT OF THE POWERS

A FEW days after there was a brilliant reunion at Princess Shadursky's. All the beauty and fashion of St. Petersburg were invited, and few who were invited failed to come. It happened that Prince Shadursky was an admirer of the fair sex, and also that he had had the pleasure of meeting the brilliant Baroness von Döring at Hamburg, and again in Paris. It was, therefore, to be expected that Baroness von Döring should be found in the midst of an admiring throng at Princess Shadursky's reception. Her brother, Ian Karozitch, was also there, suave, alert, dignified, losing no opportunity to make friends with the distinguished company that thronged he prince's rooms.

Late in the evening the baroness and her brother might have been seen engaged in a *tête-à-tête*, seated in two comfortable armchairs, and anyone who was near enough might have heard the following conversation:

"How goes it?" Karozitch asked in a low tone.

"As you see, I am making a hit," answered the baroness in the same quiet tone. But her manner was so detached and indifferent that no one could have guessed her remark was of the least significance. It should be noted that this was her first official presentation to St. Petersburg society. And in truth her beauty, united with her lively intellect, her amiability, and her perfect taste in dress, had produced a general and even remarkable effect. People talked about her and became interested in her, and her first evening won her several admirers among those well placed in society.

"I have been paying attention to the solid capitalists," replied Karozitch; "we have made our *début* in the *rôle* of practical actors. Well, what about him?" he continued, indicating Prince Shadursky with his eyes.

"In the web," she replied, with a subtle smile.

"Then we can soon suck his brains?"

"Soon—but he must be tied tighter first. But we must not talk here." A moment later Karozitch and the baroness were in the midst of the brilliant groups of guests.

A few late comers were still arriving. "Count Kallash!" announced the footman, who stood at the chief entrance to the large hall.

At this new and almost unknown but high-sounding name, many eyes were turned toward the door through which the newcomer must enter. A hum of talk spread among the guests:

"Count Kallash——"

"Who is he——?"

"It is a Hungarian name—I think I heard of him somewhere."

"Is this his first appearance?"

"Who is this Kallash? Oh, yes, one of the old Hungarian families——"

"How interesting——"

Such questions and answers crossed each other in a running fire among the various groups of guests who filled the hall, when a young man appeared in the doorway.

He lingered a moment to glance round the rooms and the company; then, as if conscious of the remarks and glances directed toward him, but completely "ignoring" them, and without the least shyness or awkwardness, he walked quietly through the hall to the host and hostess of the evening.

People of experience, accustomed to society and the ways of the great world, can often decide from the first minute the *rôle* which anyone is likely to play among them. People of experience, at the first view of this young man, at his first entrance, merely by the way he entered the hall, decided that his *rôle* in society would be brilliant—that more than one feminine heart would beat faster for his presence, that more than one dandy's wrath would be kindled by his successes.

"How handsome he is!" a whisper went round among the ladies. The men for the most part remained silent. A few twisted the ends of their mustache and made as though they had not noticed him. This was already enough to foreshadow a brilliant career.

And indeed Count Kallash could not have passed unnoticed, even among a thousand young men of his class. Tall and vigorous, wonderfully well proportioned, he challenged comparison with Antinoüs. His pale face, tanned by the sun, had an expression almost of weariness. His high forehead, with clustering black hair and sharply marked brows, bore the impress of passionate feeling and turbulent thought strongly repressed. It was difficult to define the color of his deep-set, somewhat sunken eyes, which now flashed with southern fire, and were now veiled, so that one seemed to be looking into an abyss. A slight mustache and pointed beard partly concealed the ironical smile that played on his passionate lips. The natural grace of good manners and quiet but admirably cut clothes completed the young man's exterior, behind which, in spite of all his reticence, could be divined a haughty and exceptional nature. A more profound psychologist would have seen in him an obstinately passionate, ungrateful nature, which takes from others everything it desires, demanding it from them as a right and without even a nod of acknowledgment. Such was Count Nicholas Kallash.

A few days after the reception at Prince Shadursky's Baroness von Döring was installed in a handsome apartment on Mokhovoi Street, at which her "brother," Ian Karozitch, or, to give him his former name, Bodlevski, was a frequent visitor. By a "lucky accident" he had met on the day following the reception our old friend Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff, the "captain of the Golden Band." Their recognition was mutual, and, after a more or less faithful recital of the events of the intervening years, they had entered into an offensive and defensive alliance.

When Baroness von Döring was comfortably settled in her new quarters, Sergei Antonovitch brought a visitor to Bodlevski: none other than the Hungarian nobleman, Count Nicholas Kallash.

"Gentlemen, you are strangers; let me introduce you to each other," said Kovroff, presenting Count Kallash to Bodlevski.

"Very glad to know you," answered the Hungarian count, to Bodlevski's astonishment in Russian; "very glad, indeed! I have several times had the honor of hearing of you. Was it not you who had some trouble about forged notes in Paris?"

"Oh, no! You are mistaken, dear count!" answered Bodlevski, with a pleasant smile. "The matter was not of the slightest importance. The amount was a trifle and I was unwilling even to appear in court!"

"You preferred a little journey to Russia, didn't you?" Kovroff remarked with a smile.

"Little vexations of that kind may happen to anyone," said Bodlevski, ignoring Kovroff's interruption. "You yourself, dear count, had some trouble about some bonds, if I am not mistaken?"

"You are mistaken," the count interrupted him sharply. "I have had various troubles, but I prefer not to talk about them."

"Gentlemen," interrupted Kovroff, "we did not come here to quarrel, but to talk business. Our good friend, Count Kallash," he went on, turning to Bodlevski, "wishes to have the pleasure of coöperating in our common undertaking, and—I can recommend him very highly."

"Ah!" said Bodlevski, after a searching study of the count's face. "I understand! the baroness will return in a few minutes and then we can discuss matters at our leisure."

But in spite of this understanding it was evident that Bodlevski and Count Kallash had not impressed each other very favorably. This, however, did not prevent the concert of the powers from working vigorously together.

X

AN UNEXPECTED REUNION

On the wharf of the Fontauka, not far from Simeonovski Bridge, a crowd was gathered. In the midst of the crowd a dispute raged between an old woman, tattered, disheveled, miserable, and an impudent-looking youth. The old woman was evidently stupid from misery and destitution.

While the quarrel raged a new observer approached the crowd. He was walking leisurely, evidently without an aim and merely to pass the time, so it is not to be wondered at that the loud dispute arrested his attention.

"Who are you, anyway, you old hag? What is your name?" cried the impudent youth.

"My name? My name?" muttered the old woman in confusion. "I am a—I am a princess," and she blinked at the crowd.

Everyone burst out laughing. "Her Excellency, the Princess! Make way for the Princess!" cried the youth.

The old woman burst into sudden anger.

"Yes, I tell you, I am a princess by birth!" and her eyes flashed as she tried to draw herself up and impose on the bantering crowd.

"Princess What? Princess Which? Princess How?" cried the impudent youth, and all laughed loudly.

"No! Not Princess How!" answered the old woman, losing the last shred of self-restraint; "but Princess Che-che-vin-ski! Princess Anna Chechevinski!"

When he heard this name Count Kallash started and his whole expression changed. He grew suddenly pale, and with a vigorous effort pushed his way through the crowd to the miserable old woman's side.

"Come!" he said, taking her by the arm. "Come with me! I have something for you!"

"Something for me?" answered the old woman, looking up with stupid inquiry and already forgetting the existence of the impudent youth. "Yes, I'll come! What have you got for me?"

Count Kallash led her by the arm out of the crowd, which began to disperse, abashed by his appearance and air of determination. Presently he hailed a carriage, and putting the old woman in, ordered the coachman to drive to his rooms.

There he did his best to make the miserable old woman comfortable, and his housekeeper presently saw that she was washed and fed, and soon the old woman was sleeping in the housekeeper's room.

To explain this extraordinary event we must go back twenty years.

In 1838 Princess Anna Chechevinski, then in her twenty-sixth year, had defied her parents, thrown to the winds the traditions of her princely race, and fled with the man of her choice, followed by her mother's curses and the ironical congratulations of her brother, who thus became sole heir.

After a year or two she was left alone by the death of her companion, and step by step she learned all the lessons of sorrow. From one stage of misfortune to another she gradually fell into the deepest misery, and had become a poor old beggar in the streets when Count Kallash came so unexpectedly to her rescue.

It will be remembered that, as a result of Natasha's act of vengeance, the elder Princess Chechevinski left behind her only a fraction of the money her son expected to inherit. And this fraction he by no means hoarded, but with cynical disregard of the future he poured money out like water, gambling, drinking, plunging into every form of dissipation. Within a few months his entire inheritance was squandered.

Several years earlier Prince Chechevinski had taken a deep interest in conjuring and had devoted time and care to the study of various forms of parlor magic. He had even paid considerable sums to traveling conjurers in exchange for their secrets. Naturally gifted, he had mastered some of the most difficult tricks, and his skill in card conjuring would not have done discredit even to a professional magician.

The evening when his capital had almost melted away and the shadow of ruin lay heavy upon him, he happened to be present at a reception where card play was going on and considerable sums were staked.

A vacancy at one of the tables could not be filled, and, in spite of his weak protest of unwillingness, Prince Chechevinski was pressed into service. He won for the first few rounds, and then began to lose, till the amount of his losses far exceeded the slender remainder of his capital. A chance occurred where, by the simple expedient of neutralizing the cut, mere child's play for one so skilled in conjuring, he was able to turn the scale in his favor, winning back in a single game all that he had already lost. He had hesitated for a moment, feeling the abyss yawning beneath him; then he had falsed, made the pass, and won the game. That night he swore to himself that he would never cheat again, never again be tempted to dishonor his birth; and he kept his oath till his next run of bad luck, when he once more neutralized the cut and turned the "luck" in his direction.

The result was almost a certainty from the outset, Prince Chechevinski became a habitual card sharper.

For a long time fortune favored him. His mother's reputation for wealth, the knowledge that he was her sole heir, the high position of the family, shielded him from suspicion. Then came the thunderclap. He was caught in the act of "dealing a second" in the English Club, and driven from the club as a blackleg. Other reverses followed: a public refusal on the part of an officer to play cards with him, followed by a like refusal to give him satisfaction in a duel; a second occasion in which he was caught redhanded; a criminal trial; six years in Siberia. After two years he escaped by way of the Chinese frontier, and months after returned to Europe. For two years he practiced his skill at Constantinople. Then he made his way to Buda-Pesth, then to Vienna. While in the dual monarchy, he had come across a poverty-stricken Magyar noble, named Kallash, whom he had sheltered in a fit of generous pity, and who had died in his room at the Golden Eagle Inn. Prince Chechevinski, who had already borne many aliases, showed his grief at the old Magyar's death by adopting his name and title; hence it was that he presented himself in St. Petersburg in the season of 1858 under the high-sounding title of Count Kallash.

An extraordinary coincidence, already described, had brought him face to face with his sister Anna, whom he had never even heard of in all the years since her flight. He found her now, poverty-stricken, prematurely old, almost demented, and, though he had hated her cordially in days gone by, his pity was aroused by her wretchedness, and he took her to his home, clothed and fed her, and surrounded her with such comforts as his bachelor apartment offered.

In the days that followed, every doubt he might have had as to her identity was dispelled. She talked freely of their early childhood, of their father's death, of their mother; she even spoke of her brother's coldness and hostility in terms which drove away the last shadow of doubt whether she was really his sister. But at first he made no corresponding revelations, remaining for her only Count Kallash.

XI

THE PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM

Little by little, however, as the poor old woman recovered something of health and strength, his heart went out toward her. Telling her only certain incidents of his life, he gradually brought the narrative back to the period, twenty years before, immediately after their mother's death, and at last revealed himself to his sister, after making her promise secrecy as to his true name. Thus matters went on for nearly two years.

The broken-down old woman lived in his rooms in something like comfort, and took pleasure in dusting and arranging his things. One day, when she was tidying the sitting room, her brother was startled by a sudden exclamation, almost a cry, which broke from his sister's lips.

"Oh, heaven, it is she!" she cried, her eyes fixed on a page of the photograph album she had been dusting. "Brother, come here; for heaven's sake, who is this?"

"Baroness von Döring," curtly answered Kallash, glancing quickly at the photograph. "What do you find interesting in her?"

"It is either she or her double! Do you know who she looks like?"

"Lord only knows! Herself, perhaps!"

"No, she has a double! I am sure of it! Do you remember, at mother's, my maid Natasha?"

"Natasha?" the count considered, knitting his brows in the effort to recollect.

"Yes, Natasha, my maid. A tall, fair girl. A thick tress of chestnut hair. She had such beautiful hair! And her lips had just the same proud expression. Her eyes were piercing and intelligent, her brows were clearly marked and joined together—in a word, the very original of this photograph!"

"Ah," slowly and quietly commented the count, pressing his hand to his brow. "Exactly. Now I remember! Yes, it is a striking likeness."

"But look closely," cried the old woman excitedly; "it is the living image of Natasha! Of course she is more matured, completely developed. How old is the baroness?"

"She must be approaching forty. But she doesn't look her age; you would imagine her to be about thirty-two from her appearance."

"There! And Natasha would be just forty by now!"

"The ages correspond," answered her brother.

"Yes." Princess Anna sighed sadly. "Twenty-two years have passed since then. But if I met her face to face I think I would recognize her at once. Tell me, who is she?"

"The baroness? How shall I tell you? She has been abroad for twenty years, and for the last two years she has lived here. In society she says she is a foreigner, but with me she is franker, and I know that she speaks Russian perfectly. She declares that her husband is somewhere in Germany, and that she lives here with her brother."

"Who is the 'brother'?" asked the old princess curiously.

"The deuce knows! He is also a bit shady. Oh, yes! Sergei Kovroff knows him; he told me something about their history; he came here with a forged passport, under the name of Vladislav Karozitch, but his real name is Kasimir Bodlevski."

"Kasimir Bodlevski," muttered the old woman, knitting her brows. "Was he not once a lithographer or an engraver, or something of the sort?"

"I think he was. I think Kovroff said something about it. He is a fine engraver still."

"He was? Well, there you are!" and Princess Anna rose quickly from her seat. "It is she—it is Natasha! She used to tell me she had a sweetheart, a Polish hero, Bodlevski. And I think his name was Kasimir. She often got my permission to slip out to visit him; she said he worked for a lithographer, and always begged me to persuade mother to liberate her from serfdom, so that she could marry him."

This unexpected discovery meant much to Kallash. Circumstances, hitherto slight and isolated, suddenly gained a new meaning, and were lit up in a way that made him almost certain of the truth. He now remembered that Kovroff had once told him of his first acquaintance with Bodlevski, when he came on the Pole at the Cave, arranging for a false passport; he remembered that Natasha had disappeared immediately before the death of the elder Princess Chechevinski, and he also remembered how, returning from the cemetery, he had been cruelly disappointed in his expectations when he had found in the strong box a sum very much smaller than he had always counted on, and with some foundation; and before him, with almost complete certainty, appeared the conclusion that the maid's disappearance was connected with the theft of his mother's money, and especially of the securities in his sister's name, and that all this was nothing but the doing of Natasha and her companion Bodlevski.

"Very good! Perhaps this information will come in handy!" he said to himself, thinking over his future measures and plans. "Let us see—let us feel our way—perhaps it is really so! But I must go carefully and keep on my guard, and the whole thing is in my hands, dear baroness! We will spin a thread from you before all is over."

XII

THE BARONESS AT HOME

Every Wednesday Baroness von Döring received her intimate friends. She did not care for rivals, and therefore ladies were not invited to these evenings. The intimate circle of the baroness consisted of our Knights of Industry and the "pigeons" of the bureaucracy, the world of finance, the aristocracy, which were the objects of the knights' desires. It often happened, however, that the number of guests at these intimate evenings went as high as fifty, and sometimes even more.

The baroness was passionately fond of games of chance, and always sat down to the card table with enthusiasm. But as this was done conspicuously, in sight of all her guests, the latter could not fail to note that fortune obstinately turned away from the baroness. She almost never won on the green cloth; sometimes Kovroff won, sometimes Kallash, sometimes Karozitch, but with the slight difference that the last won more seldom and less than the other two.

Thus every Wednesday a considerable sum found its way from the pocketbook of the baroness into that of one of her colleagues, to find its way back again the next morning. The purpose of this clever scheme was that the "pigeons" who visited the luxurious salons of the baroness, and whose money paid the expenses of these salons, should not have the smallest grounds for suspicion that the dear baroness's apartment was nothing but a den of sharpers. Her guests all considered her charming, to begin with, and also rich and independent and passionate by nature. This explained her love of play and the excitement it brought, and which she would not give up, in spite of her repeated heavy losses.

Her colleagues, the Knights of Industry, acted on a carefully devised and rigidly followed plan. They were far from putting their uncanny skill in motion every Wednesday. So long as they had no big game in sight, the game remained clean and honest. In this way the band might lose two or three thousand rubles, but such a loss had no great importance, and was soon made up when some fat "pigeon" appeared.

It sometimes happened that this wily scheme of honest play went on for five or six weeks in succession, so that the small fry, winning the band's money, remained entirely convinced that it was playing in an honorable and respectable private house, and very naturally spread abroad the fame of it throughout the whole city. But when the fat pigeon at last appeared, the band put forth all its forces, all the wiles of the black art, and in a few hours made up for the generous losses of a month of honorable and irreproachable play on the green cloth.

Midnight was approaching.

The baroness's rooms were brilliantly lit up, but, thanks to the thick curtains which covered the windows, the lights could not be seen from the street, though several carriages were drawn up along the sidewalk.

Opening into the elegant drawing-room was a not less elegant card room, appreciatively nicknamed the Inferno by the band. In it stood a large table with a green cloth, on which lay a heap of bank notes and two little piles of gold, before which sat Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff, presiding over the bank with the composure of a true gentleman.

What Homeric, Jovine calm rested on every feature of his face! What charming, fearless self-assurance, what noble self-confidence in his smile, in his glance! What grace, what distinction in his pose, and especially in the hand which dealt the cards! Sergei Kovroff's hands were decidedly worthy of attention. They were almost always clad in new gloves, which he only took off on special occasions, at dinner, or when he had some writing to do, or when he sat down to a game of cards. As a result, his hands were almost feminine in their delicacy, the sensibility of the finger tips had reached an extraordinary degree of development, equal to that of one born blind. And those fingers were skillful, adroit, alert, their every movement carried out with that smooth, indefinable grace which is almost always possessed by the really high-class card sharper. His fingers were adorned with numerous rings, in which sparkled diamonds and other precious stones. And it was not for nothing that Sergei Kovroff took pride in them! This glitter of diamonds, scattering rainbow rays, dazzled the eyes of his fellow players. When Sergei Kovroff sat down to preside over the bank, the sparkling of the diamonds admirably masked those motions of his fingers which needed to be masked; they almost insensibly drew away the eyes of the players from his fingers, and this was most of all what Sergei Kovroff desired.

Round the table about thirty guests were gathered. Some of them sat, but most of them played standing, with anxious faces, feverishly sparkling eyes, and breathing heavily and unevenly. Some were pale, some flushed, and all watched with passionate eagerness the fall of the cards. There were also some who had perfect command of themselves, distinguished by extraordinary coolness, and jesting lightly whether they lost or won. But such happily constituted natures are always a minority when high play is going on.

Silence reigned in the Inferno. There was almost no conversation; only once in a while was heard a remark, in a whisper or an undertone, addressed by a player to his neighbor; the only sound was that short, dry rustle of the cards and the crackling of new bank notes, or the tinkle of gold coins making their way round the table from the bank to the players, and from the players back to the bank.

The two Princes Shadursky, father and son, both lost heavily. They sat opposite Sergei Kovroff, and between them sat Baroness von Döring, who played in alliance with them. The clever Natasha egged them on, kindling their excitement with all the skill and calculation possible to one whose blood was as cold as the blood of a fish, and both the Shadurskys had lost their heads, no longer knowing how much they were losing.

XIII

AN EXPLANATION

Count Kallash and his sister had just breakfasted when the count's French footman entered the study.

"Madame la baronne von Döring!" he announced obsequiously.

Brother and sister exchanged a rapid glance.

"Now is our opportunity to make sure," said Kallash, with a smile.

"If it is she, I shall recognize her by her voice," whispered Princess Anna. "Shall I remain here or go?"

"Remain in the meantime; it will be a curious experience. *Faites entrer!*" he added to the footman.

A moment later light, rapid footsteps were heard in the entrance hall, and the rustling of a silk skirt.

"How do you do, count! I have come to see you for a moment. I came in all haste, on purpose. I have come *in person,* you must be duly appreciative! Vladislav is too busy, and the matter is an important one. I wanted to see you at the earliest opportunity. Well, we may all congratulate ourselves. Fate and fortune are decidedly on our side!" said the baroness, speaking rapidly, as she entered the count's study.

"What has happened? What is the news?" asked the count, going forward to meet her.

"We have learned that the Shadurskys have just received a large sum of money; they have sold an estate, and the purchaser has paid them in cash. Our opportunity has come. Heaven forbid that we should lose it! We must devise a plan to make the most of it."

The baroness suddenly stopped short in the middle of the sentence, and became greatly confused, noticing that there was a third person present.

"Forgive me! I did not give you warning," said the count, shrugging his shoulders and smiling; "permit me! *Princess Anna Chechevinski!*" he continued with emphasis, indicating his poor, decrepit sister. "Of course you would not have recognized her, baroness."

"But *I* recognized Natasha immediately," said the old woman quietly, her eyes still fixed on Natasha's face.

The baroness suddenly turned as white as a sheet, and with trembling hands caught the back of a heavy armchair.

Kallash with extreme politeness assisted her to a seat.

"You didn't expect to meet me, Natasha?" said the old woman gently and almost caressingly, approaching her.

"I do not know you. Who are you?" the baroness managed to whisper, by a supreme effort.

"No wonder; I am so changed," replied Princess Anna. "But *you* are just the same. There is hardly any change at all."

Natasha began to recover her composure.

"I don't understand you," she said coldly, contracting her brows.

"But I understand *you* perfectly."

"Allow me, princess," Kallash interrupted her, "permit me to have an explanation with the baroness; she and I know each other well. And if you will pardon me, I shall ask you in the meantime to withdraw."

And he courteously conducted his sister to the massive oak doors, which closed solidly after her.

"What does this mean?" said the baroness, rising angrily, her gray eyes flashing at the count from under her broad brows.

"A coincidence," answered Kallash, shrugging his shoulders with an ironical smile.

"How a coincidence? Speak clearly!"

"The former mistress has recognized her former maid—that is all."

"How does this woman come to be here? Who is she?"

"I have told you already; Princess Anna Chechevinski. And as to how she came here, that was also a coincidence, and a strange one."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the baroness.

"Why impossible? They say the dead sometimes return from the tomb, and the princess is still alive. And why should the matter not have happened thus, for instance? Princess Anna Chechevinski's maid Natasha took advantage of the confidence and illness of the elder princess to steal from her strong box, with the aid of her sweetheart, Kasimir Bodlevski, money and securities—mark this, baroness—securities in the name of Princess Anna. And might it not happen that this same lithographer Bodlevski should get false passports at the Cave, for himself and his sweetheart, and flee with her across the frontier, and might not this same maid, twenty years later, return to Russia under the name of Baroness von Döring? You must admit that there is nothing fantastic in all this! What is the use of concealing? You see I know everything!"

"And what follows from all this?" replied the baroness with a forced smile of contempt.

"Much *may* follow from it," significantly but quietly replied Kallash. "But at present the only important matter is, that I know all. I repeat it—*all*."

"Where are your facts?" asked the baroness.

"Facts? Hm!" laughed Kallash. "If facts are needed, they will be forthcoming. Believe me, dear baroness, that if I had not legally sufficient facts in my hands, I would not have spoken to you of this."

Kallash lied, but lied with the most complete appearance of probability.

The baroness again grew confused and turned white.

"Where are your facts? Put them in my hands!" she said at last, after a prolonged silence.

"Oh, this is too much! Get hold of them yourself!" the count replied, with the same smile. "The facts are generally set forth to the prisoner by the court; but it is enough for you in the meantime to know that the facts exist, and that they are in my possession. Believe, if you wish. If you do not wish, do not believe. I will neither persuade you nor dissuade you."

"And this means that I am in your power? she said slowly, raising her piercing glance to his face.

"Yes; it means that you are in my power," quietly and confidently answered Count Kallash.

"But you forget that you and I are in the same boat."

"You mean that I am a sharper, like you and Bodlevski? Well, you are right. We are all berries of the same bunch—except *her*" (and he indicated the folding doors). "She, thanks to many things, has tasted misery, but she is honest. But we are all rascals, and I first of all. You are perfectly right in that. If you wish to get me in your power—try to find some facts against me. Then we shall be quits!"

"And what is it you wish?"

"It is too late for justice, at least so far as she is concerned," replied the count, with a touch of sadness; "but it is not too late for a measure of reparation. But we can discuss that later," he went on more lightly, as if throwing aside the heavy impression produced by the thought of Princess Anna's misery. "And now, dear baroness, let us return to business, the business of Prince Shadursky! I will think the matter over, and see whether anything suggests itself."

He courteously conducted the baroness to the carriage, and they parted, to all appearance, friends. But there were dangerous elements for both in that seeming friendship.

XIV

GOLD MINING

A WONDERFUL scheme was hatched in Count Kallash's fertile brain. Inspired by the thought of Prince Shadursky's newly replenished millions, he devised a plan for the gang which promised brilliant results, and only needed the aid of a discreet and skillful confederate. And what confederate could be more trustworthy than Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff? So the two friends were presently to be found in secret consultation in the count's handsome study, with a bottle of good Rhine wine before them, fine cigars between their lips, and the memory of a well-served breakfast lingering pleasantly in their minds. They were talking about the new resources of the Shadurskys.

"To take their money at cards—what a wretched business—and so infernally commonplace," said Count Kallash. "To tell you the truth, I have for a long time been sick of cards! And, besides, time is money! Why should we waste several weeks, or even months, over something that could be done in a few days?"

Kovroff agreed completely, but at the same time put the question, if not cards, what plan was available?

"That is it exactly!" cried Kallash, warming up. "I have thought it all over. The problem is this: we must think up something that would surprise Satan himself, something that would make all Hades smile and blow us hot kisses. But what of Hades?—that's all nonsense. We must do something that will make the whole Golden Band throw up their caps. That is what we have to do!"

"Quite a problem," lazily answered Kovroff, chewing the end of his cigar. "But you are asking too much."

"But that is not all," the count interrupted him; "listen! This is what my problem demands. We must think of some project that unites two precious qualities: first, a rapid and huge profit; second, entire absence of risk."

"Conditions not altogether easy to fulfill," remarked Kovroff doubtfully.

"So it seems. And daring plans are not to be picked up in the street, but are the result of inspiration. It is what is called a 'heavenly gift,' my dear friend."

"And you have had an inspiration?" smiled Sergei Antonovitch, with a slightly ironical shade of friendly skepticism.

"I have had an inspiration," replied the supposititious Hungarian nobleman, falling into the other's tone.

"And your muse is——?"

"The tenth of the muses," the count interrupted him: "another name is Industry."

"She is the muse of all of us."

"And mine in particular. But we are not concerned with her, but with her prophetic revelations."

"Oh, dear count! Circumlocutions apart! This Rhine wine evidently carries you to misty Germany. Tell me simply what the matter is."

"The matter is simply this: we must institute a society of 'gold miners,' and we must find gold in places where the geological indications are dead against it. That is the problem. The Russian laws, under threat of arrest and punishment, sternly forbid the citizens of the Russian Empire, and likewise the citizens of other lands within the empire, to buy or sell the noble metals in their crude form, that is, in nuggets, ore, or dust. For example, if you bought gold in the rough from me—gold dust, for example—we should both, according to law, have to take a pleasant little trip beyond the Ural Mountains to Siberia, and there we should have to engage in mining the precious metal ourselves. A worthy occupation, no doubt, but not a very profitable one for us."

"Our luxuries would be strictly limited," jested Kovroff, with a wry smile.

"There it is! You won't find many volunteers for that occupation, and that is the fulcrum of my whole plan. You must understand that gold dust in the mass is practically indistinguishable in appearance from brass filings. Let us suppose that we secretly sell some perfectly pure brass filings for gold dust, and that they are readily bought of us, because we sell considerably below the market rate. It goes without saying that the purchaser will presently discover that we have done him brown. But, I ask you, will he go and accuse us knowing that, as the penalty for his purchase, he will have to accompany us along the Siberian road?"

"No man is his own enemy," sententiously replied Kovroff, beginning to take a vivid interest in what his companion was saying. "But how are you going to work it?"

"You will know at the proper time. The chief thing is, that our problem is solved in the most decisive manner. You and I are pretty fair judges of human nature, so we may be pretty sure that we shall always find purchasers, and I suggest that we make a beginning on young Prince Shadursky. How we shall get him into it is my business. I'll tell you later on. But how do you like the general idea of my plan?"

"It's clever enough!" cried Kovroff, pressing his hand with the gay enthusiasm of genuine interest.

"For this truth much thanks!" cried Kallash, clinking glasses with him. "It is clever—that is the best praise I could receive from you. Let us drink to the success of my scheme!"

XV

THE FISH BITES

THREE days after this conversation the younger prince Shadursky dined with Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff.

That morning he received a note from Kovroff, in which the worthy Sergei complained of ill health and begged the prince to come and dine with him and cheer him up.

The prince complied with his request, and appearing at the appointed time found Count Kallash alone with his host.

Among other gossip, the prince announced that he expected shortly to go to Switzerland, as he had bad reports of the health of his mother, who was in Geneva.

At this news Kallash glanced significantly toward Kovroff.

Passing from topic to topic, the conversation finally turned to the financial position of Russia. Sergei Antonovitch, according to his expression, "went to the root of the matter," and indicated the "source of the evil," very frankly attacking the policy of the government, which did everything to discourage gold mining, hedging round this most important industry with all kinds of difficulties, and practically prohibiting the free production of the precious metals by laying on it a dead weight of costly formalities.

"I have facts ready to hand," he went on, summing up his argument. "I have an acquaintance here, an employee of one of the best-known men in the gold-mining industry." Here Kovroff mentioned a well-known name. "He is now in St. Petersburg. Well, a few days ago he suddenly came to me as if he had something weighing on his mind. And I have had business relations with him in times past. Well, what do you think? He suddenly made me a proposal, secretly of course; would I not take some gold dust off his hands? You must know that these trusted employees every year bring several hundred pounds of gold from Asia, and of course it stands to reason that they cannot get rid of it in the ordinary way, but smuggle it through private individuals. It is uncommonly profitable for the purchasers, because they buy far below the market rates. So there are plenty of purchasers. Several of the leading jewelers" (and here he named three or four of the best-known firms) "never refuse such a deal, and last year a banking house in Berlin bought a hundred pounds' weight of gold through agents here. Well, this same employee, my acquaintance, is looking for an opportunity to get rid of his wares. And he tells me he managed to bring in about forty pounds of gold, if not more. I introduce this fact to illustrate the difficulties put in the way of enterprise by our intelligent government."

Shadursky did not greatly occupy himself with serious questions and he was totally ignorant of all details of financial undertakings. It was, therefore, perfectly easy for Sergei Antonovitch to assume a tone of solid, practical sense, which imposed completely on the young prince. Young Shadursky, from politeness, and to prove his worldly wisdom, assented to Kovroff's statements with equal decision. All the same, from this conversation, he quite clearly seized on the idea that under certain circumstances it would be possible to buy gold at a much lower price than that demanded by the Imperial Bank. And this was just the thought which Kallash and Kovroff wished to sow in the young prince's mind.

"Of course, I myself do not go in for that kind of business," went on Kovroff carelessly, "and so I could not give my friend any help. But if some one were going abroad, for instance, he might well risk such an operation, which would pay him a very handsome profit."

"How so? In what way?" asked Shadursky.

"Very simply. You buy the goods here, as I already said, much below the government price. So that to begin with you make a very profitable bargain. Then you go abroad with your wares and there, as soon as the exchange value of gold goes up, you can sell it at the nearest bank. I know, for instance, that the agent of the —— Bank" (and he mentioned a name well known in St. Petersburg) "made many a pretty penny for himself by just such a deal. This is how it was: He bought gold dust for forty thousand rubles, and six weeks later got rid of it in Hamburg for sixty thousand. Whatever you may say, fifty per cent on your capital in a month and a half is pretty good business."

"Deuce take it! A pretty profitable bargain, without a doubt!" cried Shadursky, jumping from his chair. "It would just suit me! I could get rid of it in Geneva or Paris," he went on in a jesting tone.

"What do you think? Of course!" Sergei Antonovitch took him up, but in a serious tone. "You or some one else—in any case it would be a good bargain. For my acquaintance has to go back to Asia, and has only a few days to spare. He doesn't know where to turn and rather than take his gold back with him, he would willingly let it go at an even lower rate than the smugglers generally ask. If I had enough free cash I would go in for it myself."

"It looks a good proposition," commented Count Kallash.

"It is certainly very enticing; what do you think?" said Prince Shadursky interrogatively, folding his arms.

"Hm—yes! very enticing," answered Kovroff. "A fine chance for anyone who has the money."

"I would not object! I would not object!" protested Shadursky. "Suppose you let me become acquainted with your friend."

"You? Well—" And Kovroff considered; "if you wish. Why not? Only I warn you, first, if you are going to buy, buy quickly, for my friend can't wait; and secondly, keep the matter a complete secret, for very unpleasant results might follow."

"That goes without saying. That stands to reason," assented Shadursky. "I can get the money at once and I am just going abroad, in a day or two at the latest. So it would be foolish to miss such a chance. So it is a bargain?" And he held out his hand to Kovroff.

"How a bargain?" objected the cautious Sergei Antonovitch. "I am not personally concerned in the matter, and you must admit, my dear prince, that I can make no promises for my acquaintance."

"I don't mean that!" cried Shadursky. "I only ask you to arrange for me to meet him. Bring us together—and drop him a hint that I do not object to buying his wares. You will confer a great obligation on me."

"Oh, that is quite a different matter. That I can always do; the more so, because we are such good friends. Why should I not do you such a trifling service? As far as an introduction is concerned, you may count on it."

And they cordially shook each other by the hand.

XVI

GOLD DUST

Both Kallash and Kovroff were too cautious to take an immediate, personal part in the gold-dust sale. There was a certain underling, Mr. Escrocevitch by name, at Sergei Kovroff's beck and call—a shady person, rather dirty in aspect, and who was, therefore, only admitted to Sergei's presence by the back door and through the kitchen, and even then only at times when there were no outsiders present.

Mr. Escrocevitch was a person of general utility and was especially good at all kinds of conjuring tricks. Watches, snuff-boxes, cigar-cases, silver spoons, and even heavy bronze paper-weights acquired the property of suddenly vanishing from under his hands, and of suddenly reappearing in a quite unexpected quarter. This valuable gift had been acquired by Mr. Escrocevitch in his early years, when he used to wander among the Polish fairs, swallowing burning flax for the delectation of the public and disgorging endless yards of ribbon and paper.

Mr. Escrocevitch was a precious and invaluable person also owing to his capacity of assuming any *rôle*, turning himself into any given character, and taking on the corresponding tone, manners, and appearance, and he was, further, a pretty fair actor.

He it was who was chosen to play the part of the Siberian employee.

Not more than forty-eight hours had passed since the previous conversation. Prince Shadursky was just up, when his footman announced to him that a Mr. Valyajnikoff wished to see him.

The prince put on his dressing gown and went into the drawing-room, where the tolerably presentable but strangely dressed person of Mr. Escrocevitch presented itself to him.

"Permit me to have the honor of introducing myself," he began, bowing to Prince Shadursky; "I am Ivanovitch Valyajnikoff. Mr. Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff was so good as to inform me of a certain intention of yours about the dust. So, if your excellency has not changed your mind, I am ready to sell it to you with pleasure."

"Very good of you," answered Prince Shadursky, smiling gayly, and giving him a chair.

"To lose no time over trifles," continued Mr. Escrocevitch, "let me invite you to my quarters. I am staying at a hotel; you can see the goods there; you can make tests, and, if you are satisfied, I shall be very happy to oblige your excellency."

Prince Shadursky immediately finished dressing, ordered his carriage, and went out with the supposititious Valyajnikoff. They drove to a shabby hotel and went to a dingy room.

"This is my poor abode. I am only here on the wing, so to speak. I humbly request you to be seated," Mr. Escrocevitch said obsequiously. "Not to lose precious time, perhaps your excellency would like to look at my wares? Here they are—and I am most willing to show them."

And he dragged from under the bed a big trunk, in which were five canvas bags of various sizes, packed full and tied tightly.

"Here, here it is! This is our Siberian dust," he said, smiling and bowing, indicating the trunk with a wave of his hand as if introducing it to Prince Shadursky.

"Would not your excellency be so good as to choose one of these bags to make a test? It will be much better if you see yourself that the business is above board, with no swindle about it. Choose whichever you wish!"

Shadursky lifted one of the bags from the trunk, and when Mr. Escrocevitch untied it, before the young prince's eyes appeared a mass of metallic grains, at which he gazed not without inward pleasure.

"How are you going to make a test?" he asked. "We have no blow-pipes nor test-tubes here?"

"Make your mind easy, your excellency! We shall find everything we require—blow-pipes and test-tubes and nitric acid, and even a decimal weighing machine. In our business we arrange matters in such a way that we need not disturb outsiders. Only charcoal we haven't got, but we can easily send for some."

And going to the door, he gave the servant in the passage an order, and a few minutes later the latter returned with a dish of charcoal.

"First class! Now everything is ready," cried Mr. Escrocevitch, rubbing his hands; and for greater security he turned the key in the door.

"Take whichever piece of charcoal you please, your excellency; but, not to soil your hands, you had better let me take it myself, and you sprinkle some of the dust on it," and he humbled himself before the prince. "Forgive me for asking you to do it all yourself, since it is not from any lack of politeness on my part, but simply in order that your excellency should be fully convinced that there is no deception." Saying this, he got his implements ready and lit the lamp.

The blow-pipe came into action. Valyajnikoff made the experiment, and Shadursky attentively followed every movement. The charcoal glowed white hot, the dust ran together and disappeared, and in its place, when the charcoal had cooled a little, and the amateur chemist presented it to Prince Shadursky, the prince saw a little ball of gold lying in a crevice of the charcoal, such as might easily have formed under the heat of the blow-pipe.

"Take the globule, your excellency, and place it, for greater security, in your pocketbook," said Escrocevitch; "you may even wrap it up in a bit of paper; and keep the sack of gold dust yourself, so that there can be no mistake."

Shadursky gladly followed this last piece of advice.

"And now, your excellency, I should like you kindly to select another bag; we shall make two or three more tests in the same way."

The prince consented to this also.

Escrocevitch handed him a new piece of charcoal to sprinkle dust on, and once more brought the blow-pipe into operation. And again the brass filings disappeared and in the crevice appeared a new globule of gold.

"Well, perhaps these two tests will be sufficient. What is your excellency good enough to think on that score?" asked the supposed Valyajnikoff.

"What is the need of further tests? The matter is clear enough," assented the prince.

"If it is satisfactory, we shall proceed to make it even more satisfactory. Here we have a touch-stone, and here we have some nitric acid. Try the globules on the touch-stone physically, and, so to speak, with the nitric acid chemically. And if you wish to make even more certain, this is what we shall do. What quantity of gold does your excellency wish to take?"

"The more the better. I am ready to buy all these bags."

"*Very* much obliged to your excellency, as this will suit me admirably," said Escrocevitch, bowing low. "And so, if your excellency is ready, then I humbly beg you to take each bag, examine it, and seal it with your excellency's own seal. Then let us take one of the globules and go to one of the best jewelers in St. Petersburg. Let him tell us the value of the gold and in this way the business will be exact; there will be no room for complaint on either side, since everything will be fair and above board."

The prince was charmed with the honesty and frankness of Mr. Valyajnikoff.

They went together to one of the best-known jewelers, who, in their presence, made a test and announced that the gold was chemically pure, without any alloy, and therefore of the highest value.

On their return to the hotel, Mr. Escrocevitch weighed the bags, which turned out to weigh forty-eight pounds. Allowing three pounds for the weight of the bags, this left forty-five pounds of pure gold.

"How much a pound do you want?" Shadursky asked him.

"A pretty low price, your excellency," answered the Siberian, with a shrug of his shoulders, "as I am selling from extreme necessity, because I have to leave for Siberia; I've spent too much time and money in St. Petersburg already; and if I cannot sell my wares, I shall not be able to go at all. I assume that the government price is known to your excellency?"

"But I am willing to take two hundred rubles a pound.

I can't take a kopeck less, and even so I am making a reduction of nearly a hundred rubles the pound."

"All right!" assented Shadursky. "That will amount to—" he went on, knitting his brows, "forty-five pounds at two hundred rubles a pound——"

"It will make exactly nine thousand, your excellency. Just exactly nine," Escrocevitch obsequiously helped him out. The prince, cutting the matter short, immediately gave him a check, and taking the trunk with the coveted bags, drove with the Siberian employee to his father's house, where the elder Prince Shadursky, at his son's pressing demand, though very unwillingly, exchanged the check for nine thousand rubles in bills, for which Ivan Ivanovitch Valyajnikoff forthwith gave a receipt. The prince was delighted with his purchase, and he did not utter a syllable about it to anyone except Kovroff.

Sergei Antonovitch gave him a friendly counsel not to waste any time, but to go abroad at once, as, according to the *Exchange Gazette*, gold was at that moment very high, so that he had an admirable opportunity to get rid of his wares on very favorable terms.

The prince, in fact, without wasting time got his traveling passport, concealed his purchase with the utmost care, and set out for the frontier, announcing that he was on his way to his mother, whose health imperatively demanded his presence.

The success of the whole business depended on the fact that brass filings, which bear a strong external resemblance to gold dust, are dissipated in the strong heat of the blowpipe. The charcoal was prepared beforehand, a slight hollow being cut in it with a penknife, in the bottom of which is placed a globule of pure gold, the top of which is just below the level of the charcoal, and the hollow is filled up with powdered charcoal mixed with a little beeswax. The "chemist" who makes the experiments must make himself familiar with the distinctive appearance of the charcoal, so as to pick it out from among several pieces, and must remember exactly where the crevice is.

On this first occasion, Escrocevitch had prepared all four pieces of charcoal, which were brought by the servant in the passage. He chose as his temporary abode a hotel whose proprietor was an old ally of his, and the servant was also a confederate.

Thus was founded the famous "Gold Products Company," which is still in very successful operation, and is constantly widening its sphere of activity.

XVII

THE DELUGE

Count Kallash finally decided on his course of action. It was too late to seek justice for his sister, but not too late for a tardy reparation. The gang had prospered greatly, and the share of Baroness von Döring and Bodlevski already amounted to a very large figure. Count Kallash determined to demand for his sister a sum equal to that of the securities in her name which Natasha had stolen, calculating that this would be enough to maintain his sister in peace and comfort to the end of her days. His own life was too stormy, too full of risks for him to allow his sister's fate to depend on his, so he had decided to settle her in some quiet nook where, free from danger, she might dream away her few remaining years.

To his surprise Baroness von Döring flatly refused to be put under contribution.

"Your demand is outrageous," she said. "I am not going to be the victim of any such plot!"

"Very well, I will compel you to unmask?"

"To unmask? What do you mean, count? You forget yourself!"

"Well, then, I shall try to make you remember me!" And Kallash turned his back on her and strode from the room. A moment later, and she heard the door close loudly behind him.

The baroness had already told Bodlevski of her meeting with Princess Anna, and she now hurried to him for counsel. They agreed that their present position, with Kallash's threats hanging over their heads, was intolerable. But what was to be done?

Bodlevski paced up and down the room, biting his lips, and seeking some decisive plan.

"We must act in such a way," he said, coming to a stand before the baroness, "as to get rid of this fellow once for all. I think he is dangerous, and it never does any harm to take proper precautions. Get the money ready, Natasha; we must give it to him."

"What! give him the money!" and the baroness threw up her hands. "Will that get us out of his power? Can we feel secure? It will only last till something new happens. At the first occasion——"

"Which will also be the last!" interrupted Bodlevski. "Suppose we do give him the money to-day; does that mean that we give it for good? Not at all! It will be back in my pocket to-morrow! Let us think it out properly!" and he gave her a friendly pat on the shoulder, and sat down in an easy chair in front of her.

The result of their deliberations was a little note addressed to Count Kallash:

"Dear Count," it ran, "I was guilty of an act of folly toward you to-day. I am ashamed of it, and wish to make amends as soon as possible. We have always been good friends, so let us forget our little difference, the more so that an alliance is much more advantageous to us both than a quarrel. Come this evening to receive the money you spoke of, and to clasp in amity the hand of your devoted friend, Von D."

Kallash came about ten o'clock in the evening, and received from Bodlevski the sum of fifty thousand rubles in notes. The baroness was very amiable, and persuaded him to have some tea. There was not a suggestion of future difficulties, and everything seemed to promise perfect harmony for the future. Bodlevski talked over plans of future undertakings, and told him, with evident satisfaction, that they had just heard of the arrest of the younger Prince Shadursky, in Paris, for attempting to defraud a bank by a pretended sale of gold dust. Count Kallash was also gay, and a certain satisfaction filled his mind at the thought of his sister's security, as he felt the heavy packet of notes in his pocket. He smoked his cigar with evident satisfaction, sipping the fragrant tea from time to time. The conversation was gay and animated, and for some reason or other turned to the subject of clubs.

"Ah, yes," interposed Bodlevski, "*à propos!* I expect to be a member of the Yacht Club this summer. Let me recommend to you a new field of action. They will disport themselves on the green water, and we on the green cloth! By the way, I forgot to speak of it—I bought a boat the other day, a mere rowboat. It is on the Fontauka Canal, at the Simeonovski bridge. We must come for a row some day."

"Delightful," exclaimed the baroness. "But why some day? Why not to-night? The moon is beautiful, and, indeed, it is hardly dark at midnight. Your speaking of boats has filled me with a sudden desire to go rowing. What do you say, dear count?" and she turned amiably to Kallash.

Count Kallash at once consented, considering the baroness's idea an admirable one, and they were soon on their way toward the Simeonovski bridge.

"How delightful it is!" cried the baroness, some half hour later, as they were gliding over the quiet water. "Count, do you like strong sensations?" she asked suddenly.

"I am fond of strong sensations of every kind," he replied, taking up her challenge.

"Well, I am going to offer you a little sensation, though it always greatly affects me. Everything is just right for it, and I am in the humor, too."

"What is it to be?" asked Count Kallash indifferently.

"You will see in a moment. Do you know that there are underground canals in St. Petersburg?"

"In St. Petersburg?" asked Kallash in astonishment.

"Yes, in St. Petersburg! A whole series of underground rivers, wide enough for a boat to pass through. I have rowed along them several times. Does not that offer a new sensation, something quite unlike St. Petersburg?"

"Yes, it is certainly novel," answered Count Kallash, now interested. "Where are they? Pray show them to me."

"There is one a few yards off. Shall we enter? You are not afraid?" she said with a smile of challenge.

"By no means—unless you command me to be afraid," Kallash replied in the same tone. "Let us enter at once!"

"Kasimir, turn under the arch!" and the boat cut across the canal toward a half circle of darkness. A moment more and the darkness engulfed them completely. They were somewhere under the Admiralty, not far from St. Isaac's Cathedral. Away ahead of them was a tiny half circle of light, where the canal joined the swiftly flowing Neva. Carriages rumbled like distant thunder above their heads.

"Deuce take it! it is really rather fine!" cried the count, with evident pleasure. "A meeting of pirates is all we need to make it perfect. It is a pity that we cannot see where we are!"

"Light a match. Have you any?" said the baroness.

"I have, and wax matches, too." The count took out a match and lit it, and the underground stream was lit by a faint ruddy glow. The channel, covered by a semicircular arch, was just wide enough for one boat to pass through, with oars out. The black water flowed silently by in a sluggish, Stygian stream. Bats, startled by the light, fluttered in their faces, and then disappeared in the darkness.

As the boat glided on, the match burned out in Count

Kallash's fingers. He threw it into the water, and opened his matchbox to take another.

At the same moment he felt a sharp blow on the head, followed by a second, and he sank senseless in the bottom of the boat.

"Where is the money?" cried Bodlevski, who had struck him with the handle of the oar. "Get his coat open!" and the baroness deftly drew the thick packet from the breast pocket of his coat. "Here it is! I have it!" she replied quickly.

"Now, overboard with him! Keep the body steady!" A dull splash, and then silence. "To-night we shall sleep secure!"

They counted without their host. Princess Anna had also her scheme of vengeance, and had worked it out, without a word to her brother. When Natasha and Bodlevski entered their apartment, they found the police in possession, and a few minutes later both were under arrest. Abundant evidence of fraud and forgery was found in their dwelling, and the vast Siberian solitudes avenged the death of their last victim.

Jörgen Wilhelm Bergsöe

The Amputated Arms

IT happened when I was about eighteen or nineteen years old (began Dr. Simsen). I was studying at the University, and being coached in anatomy by my old friend Sölling. He was an amusing fellow, this Sölling. Full of jokes and whimsical ideas, and equally merry, whether he was working at the dissecting table or brewing a punch for a jovial crowd.

He had but one fault—if one might call it so—and that was his exaggerated idea of punctuality. He grumbled if you were late two minutes; any longer delay would spoil the entire evening for him. He himself was never known to be late. At least not during the entire years of my studying.

One Wednesday evening our little circle of friends met as usual in my room at seven o'clock. I had made the customary preparations for the meeting, had borrowed three chairs—I had but one myself—had cleaned all my pipes, and had persuaded Hans to take the breakfast dishes from the sofa and carry them downstairs. One by one my friends arrived, the clock struck seven, and to our great astonishment, Sölling had not yet appeared. One, two, even five minutes passed before we heard him run upstairs and knock at the door with his characteristic short blows.

When he entered the room he looked so angry and at the same time so upset that I cried out: "What's the matter, Sölling? You look as if you had been robbed."

"That's exactly what has happened," replied Sölling angrily. "But it was no ordinary sneak thief," he added, hanging his overcoat behind the door.

"What have you lost?" asked my neighbor Nansen.

"Both arms from the new skeleton I've just recently received from the hospital," said Sölling with an expression as if his last cent had been taken from him. "It's vandalism!"

We burst out into loud laughter at this remarkable answer, but Sölling continued: "Can you imagine it? Both arms are gone, cut off at the shoulder joint;—and the strangest part of it is that the same thing has been done to my shabby old skeleton which stands in my bedroom. There wasn't an arm on either of them."

"That's too bad," I remarked. "For we were just going to study the *anatomy* of the arm to-night."

"Osteology," corrected Sölling gravely. "Get out your skeleton, little Simsen. It isn't as good as mine, but it will do for this evening."

I went to the corner where my anatomical treasures were hidden behind a green curtain—"the Museum," was what Sölling called it—but my astonishment was great when I found my skeleton in its accustomed place and wearing as usual my student's uniform—but without arms.

"The devil!" cried Sölling. "That was done by the same person who robbed me; the arms are taken off at the shoulder joint in exactly the same manner. You did it, Simsen!"

I declared my innocence, very angry at the abuse of my fine skeleton, while Nansen cried: "Wait a moment, I'll bring in mine. There hasn't been a soul in my room since this morning, I can swear to that. I'll be back in an instant."

He hurried into his room, but returned in a few moments greatly depressed and somewhat ashamed. The skeleton was in its usual place, but the arms were gone, cut off at the shoulder in exactly the same manner as mine.

The affair, mysterious in itself, had now come to be a serious matter. We lost ourselves in suggestions and explanations, none of which seemed to throw any light on the subject. Finally we sent a messenger to the other side of the house where, as I happened to know, was a new skeleton which the young student Ravn had recently received from the janitor of the hospital.

Ravn had gone out and taken the key with him. The messenger whom we had sent to the rooms of the Iceland students returned with the information that one of them had used the only skeleton they possessed to pummel the other with, and that consequently only the thigh bones were left unbroken.

What were we to do? We couldn't understand the matter at all. Sölling scolded and cursed and the company was about to break up when we heard some one coming noisily upstairs. The door was thrown open and a tall, thin figure appeared on the threshold—our good friend Niels Daae.

He was a strange chap, this Niels Daae, the true type of a species seldom found nowadays. He was no longer young, and by reason of a queer chain of circumstances, as he expressed it, he had been through nearly all the professions and could produce papers proving that he had been on the point of passing not one but three examinations.

He had begun with theology; but the story of the quarrel between Jacob and Esau had led him to take up the study of law. As a law student he had come across an interesting poisoning case, which had proved to him that a study of medicine was extremely necessary for lawyers; and he had taken up the study of medicine with such energy that he had forgotten all his law and was about to take his last examinations at the age of forty.

Niels Daae took the story of our troubles very seriously. "Every pot has two handles," he began. "Every sausage two ends, every question two sides, except this one—this has three." (Applause.) "When we look at it from the legal point of view there can be no doubt that it belongs in the category of ordinary theft. But from the fact that the thief took only the arms when he might have taken the entire skeleton, we must conclude that he is not in a responsible condition of mind, which therefore introduces a medical side to the affair. From a legal point of view, the thief must be convicted for robbery, or at least for the illegal appropriation of the property of others; but from the medical point of view, we must acquit him, because he is not responsible for his acts. Here we have two professions quarreling with one another, and who shall say which is right? But now I will introduce the theological point of view, and raise the entire affair up to a higher plane. Providence, in the material shape of a patron of mine in the country, whose children I have inoculated with the juice of wisdom, has sent me two fat geese and two first-class ducks. These animals are to be cooked and eaten this evening in Mathiesen's establishment, and I invite this honored company to join me there. Personally I look upon the disappearance of these arms as an all-wise intervention of Providence, which sets its own inscrutable wisdom up against the wisdom which we would otherwise have heard from the lips of my venerable friend Sölling."

Daae's confused speech was received with laughter and applause, and Sölling's weak protests were lost in the general delight at the invitation. I have often noticed that such improvised festivities are usually the most enjoyable, and so it was for us that evening. Niels Daae treated us to his ducks and to his most amusing jokes, Sölling sang his best songs, our jovial host Mathiesen told his wittiest stories, and the merriment was in full swing when we heard cries in the street, and then a rush of confused noises broken by screams of pain.

"There's been an accident," cried Sölling, running out to the door.

We all followed him and discovered that a pair of runaway horses had thrown a carriage against a tree, hurling the driver from his box, under the wheels. His right arm had been broken near the shoulder. In the twinkling of an eye the hall of festivities was transformed into an emergency hospital. Sölling shook his head as he examined the injury, and ordered the transport of the patient to the city hospital. It was his belief that the arm would have to be amputated, cut off at the shoulder joint, just as had been the case with our skeleton. "Damned odd coincidence, isn't it?" he remarked to me.

Our merry mood had vanished and we took our way, quiet and depressed, through the old avenues toward our home. For the first time in its existence possibly, our venerable "barracks," as we called the dormitory, saw its occupants returning home from an evening's bout just as the night watchman intoned his eleven o'clock verse.

"Just eleven," exclaimed Sölling. "It's too early to go to bed, and too late to go anywhere else. We'll go up to your room, little Simsen, and see if we can't have some sort of a lesson this evening. You have your colored plates and we'll try to get along with them. It's a nuisance that we should have lost those arms just this evening."

"The Doctor can have all the arms and legs he wants," grinned Hans, who came out of the doorway just in time to hear Sölling's last word.

"What do you mean, Hans?" asked Sölling in astonishment.

"It'll be easy enough to get them," said Hans. "They've torn down the planking around the Holy Trinity churchyard, and dug up the earth to build a new wall. I saw it myself, as I came past the church. Lord, what a lot of bones they've dug out there! There's arms and legs and heads, many more than the Doctor could possibly need."

"Much good that does us," answered Sölling. "They shut the gates at seven o'clock and it's after eleven already."

"Oh, yes, they shut them," grinned Hans again. "But there's another way to get in. If you go through the gate of the porcelain factory and over the courtyard, and through the mill in the fourth courtyard that leads out into Spring Street, there you will see where the planking is torn down, and you can get into the churchyard easily."

"Hans, you're a genius!" exclaimed Sölling in delight. "Here, Simsen, you know that factory inside and out, you're so friendly with that fellow Outzen who lives there. Run along to him and let him give you the key of the mill.

It will be easy to find an arm that isn't too much decayed. Hurry along, now; the rest of us will wait for you upstairs."

To be quite candid I must confess that I was not particularly eager to fulfill Sölling's command. I was at an age to have still a sufficient amount of reverence for death and the grave, and the mysterious occurrence of the stolen arms still ran through my mind. But I was still more afraid of Sölling's irony and of the laughter of my comrades, so I trotted off as carelessly as if I had been sent to buy a package of cigarettes.

It was some time before I could arouse the old janitor of the factory from his peaceful slumbers. I told him that I had an important message for Outzen, and hurried upstairs to the latter's room. Outzen was a strictly moral character; knowing this, I was prepared to have him refuse me the key which would let me into the fourth courtyard and from there into the cemetery. As I expected, Outzen took the matter very seriously. He closed the Hebrew Bible which he had been studying as I entered, turned up his lamp and looked at me in astonishment as I made my request.

"Why, my dear Simsen, it is a most sinful deed that you are about to do," he said gravely. "Take my advice and desist. You will get no key from me for any such cause. The peace of the grave is sacred. No man dare disturb it."

"And how about the gravedigger? He puts the newly dead down beside the old corpses, and lives as peacefully as anyone else."

"He is doing his duty," answered Outzen calmly. "But to disturb the peace of the grave from sheer daring, with the fumes of the punch still in your head,—that is a different matter,—that will surely be punished!"

His words irritated me. It is not very flattering, particularly if one is not yet twenty, to be told that you are about to perform a daring deed simply because you are drunk. Without any further reply to his protests I took the key from its place on the wall and ran downstairs two steps at a time, vowing to myself that I would take home an arm let cost what it would. I would show Outzen, and Sölling, and all the rest, what a devil of a fellow I was.

My heart beat rapidly as I stole through the long dark corridor, past the ruins of the old convent of St. Clara, into the so-called third courtyard. Here I took a lantern from the hall, lit it and crossed to the mill where the clay was prepared for the factory. The tall wheels and cylinders, with their straps and bolts, looked like weird creatures of the night in the dim light of my tallow candle. I felt my courage sinking even here, but I pulled myself together, opened the last door with my key and stepped out into the fourth courtyard. A moment later I stood on the dividing line between the cemetery and the factory.

The entire length of the tall blackened planking had been torn down. The pieces of it lay about, and the earth had been dug up to considerable depth, to make a foundation for a new wall between Life and Death. The uncanny emptiness of the place seized upon me. I halted involuntarily as if to harden myself against it. It was a raw, cold, stormy evening. The clouds flew past the moon in jagged fragments, so that the churchyard, with its white crosses and stones, lay now in full light, now in dim shadow. Now and then a rush of wind rattled over the graves, roared through the leafless trees, bent the complaining bushes, and caught itself in the little eddy at the corner of the church, only to escape again over the roofs, turning the old weather vane with a sharp scream of the rusty iron.

I looked toward the left—there I saw several weird white shapes moving gently in the moonlight. "White sheets," I said to myself, "it's nothing but white sheets! This drying of linen in the churchyard ought to be stopped."

I turned in the opposite direction and saw a heap of bones scarce two paces distant from me. Holding my lantern lower, I approached them and stretched out my hand—there was a rattling in the heap; something warm and soft touched my fingers.

I started and shivered. Then I exclaimed: "The rats! nothing but the rats in the churchyard! I must not get frightened. It will be so foolish—they would laugh at me. Where the devil is that arm? I can't find one that isn't broken!"

With trembling knees and in feverish haste I examined one heap after another. The light in my lantern flickered in the wind and suddenly went out. The foul smell of the smoking wick rose to my face and I felt as if I were about to faint. It took all my energy to recover my control. I walked two or three steps ahead, and saw at a little distance a coffin which had been still in good shape when taken out of the earth.

I approached it and saw that it was of old-fashioned shape, made of heavy oaken boards that were already rotting. On its cover was a metal plate with an illegible inscription. The old wood was so brittle that it would have been very easy for me to open the coffin with any sort of a tool. I looked about me and saw a hatchet and a couple of spades lying near the fence. I took one of the latter, put its flat end between the boards—the old coffin fell apart with a dull crackling protest.

I turned my head aside, put my hand in through the opening, felt about, and taking a firm hold on one arm of the skeleton, I loosened it from the body with a quick jerk. The movement loosened the head as well, and it rolled out through the opening right to my very feet. I took up the skull to lay it in the coffin again—and then I saw a greenish phosphorescent glimmer in its empty eye sockets, a glimmer which came and went. Mad terror shook me at the sight. I looked up at the houses in the distance, then back again to the skull; the empty sockets shone more brightly than before. I felt that I must have some natural explanation for this appearance or I would go mad. I took up the head again—and never in my life have I had so overpowering an impression of the might of death and decay than in this moment. Myriads of disgusting clammy insects poured out of every opening of the skull, and a couple of shining, wormlike centipedes—*Geophiles*, the scientists call them—crawled about in the eye sockets. I threw the skull back into the coffin, sprang over the heaps of bones without even taking time to pick up my lantern, and ran like a hunted thing through the dark mill, over the factory courtyards, until I reached the outer gate. Here I washed the arm at the fountain, and smoothed my disarranged clothing. I hid my booty under my overcoat, nodded to the sleepy old janitor as he opened the door to me, and a few moments later I entered my own room with an expression which I had attempted to make quite calm and careless.

"What the devil is the matter with you, Simsen?" cried Sölling as he saw me. "Have you seen a ghost? Or is the punch wearing off already? We thought you'd never come; why, it's nearly twelve o'clock!"

Without a word I drew back my overcoat and laid my booty on the table.

"By all the devils," exclaimed Sölling in anatomical enthusiasm, "where did you find that superb arm? Simsen knows what he's about all right. It's a girl's arm; isn't it beautiful? Just look at the hand—how fine and delicate it is! Must have worn a No. 6 glove. There's a pretty hand to caress and kiss!"

The arm passed from one to the other amid general admiration. Every word that was said increased my disgust for myself and for what I had done. It was a woman's arm, then—what sort of a woman might she have been? Young and beautiful possibly—her brothers' pride, her parents' joy. She had faded away in her youth, cared for by loving hands and tender thoughts. She had fallen asleep gently, and those who loved her had desired to give her in death the peace she had enjoyed throughout her lifetime. For this they had made her coffin of thick, heavy oaken boards. And this hand, loved and missed by so many—it lay there now on an anatomical table, encircled by clouds of tobacco smoke, stared at by curious glances, and made the object of coarse jokes. O God! how terrible it was!

"I must have that arm," exclaimed Sölling, when the first burst of admiration had passed. "When I bleach it and touch it up with varnish, it will be a superb specimen. I'll take it home with me."

"No," I exclaimed, "I can't permit it. It was wrong of me to bring it away from the churchyard. I'm going right back to put the arm in its place."

"Well, will you listen to that?" cried Sölling, amid the hearty laughter of the others. "Simsen's so lyric, he certainly must be drunk. I must have that arm at any cost."

"Not much," cut in Niels Daae; "you have no right to it. It was buried in the earth and dug out again; it is a find, and all the rest of us have just as much right to it as you have."

"Yes, everyone of us has some share in it," said some one else.

"But what are you going to do about it?" remarked Sölling. "It would be vandalism to break up that arm. What God has joined together let no man put asunder," he concluded with pathos.

"Let's auction it off," exclaimed Daae. "I will be the auctioneer, and this key to the graveyard will serve me for a hammer."

The laughter broke out anew as Daae took his place solemnly at the head of the table and began to whine out the following announcement: "I hereby notify all present that on the 25th of November, at twelve o'clock at midnight, in corridor No. 5 of the student barracks, a lady's arm in excellent condition, with all its appurtenances of wrist bones, joints, and finger tips, is to be offered at public auction. The buyer can have possession of his purchase immediately after the auction, and a credit of six weeks will be given to any reliable customer. I bid a Danish shilling."

"One mark," cried Sölling mockingly.

"Two," cried somebody else.

"Four," exclaimed Sölling. "It's worth it. Why don't you join in, Simsen? You look as if you were sitting in a hornet's nest."

I bid one mark more, and Sölling raised me a thaler. There were no more bids, the hammer fell, and the arm belonged to Sölling.

"Here, take this," he said, handing me a mark piece; "it's part of your commission as grave robber. You shall have the rest later, unless you prefer that I should turn it over to the drinking fund." With these words Sölling wrapped the arm in a newspaper, and the gay crowd ran noisily down the stairs and through the streets, until their singing and laughter were lost in the distance.

I stood alone, still dazed and bewildered, staring at the piece of money in my hand. My thoughts were far too much excited that I should hope to sleep. I turned up my lamp and took out one of my books to try and study myself into a quieter mood. But without success.

Suddenly I heard a sound like that of a swinging pendulum. I raised my head and listened attentively. There was no clock either in my room or in the neighboring ones—but I could still hear the sound. At the same moment my lamp began to flicker. The oil was apparently exhausted. I was about to rise to fill it again, when my eyes fell upon the door, and I saw the graveyard key, which I had hung there, moving slowly back and forth with a rhythmic swing. Just as its motion seemed about to die away, it would receive a gentle push as from an unseen hand, and would swing back and forth more than ever. I stood there with open mouth and staring eyes, ice-cold chills ran down my back, and drops of perspiration stood out on my forehead. Finally, I could endure it no longer. I sprang to the door, seized the key with both hands and put it on my desk under a pile of heavy books. Then I breathed a sigh of relief.

My lamp was about to go out and I discovered that I had no more oil. With feverish haste I threw my clothes off, blew out the light and sprang into bed as if to smother my fears.

But once alone in the darkness the fears grew worse than ever. They grew into dreams and visions. It seemed to me as if I were out in the graveyard again, and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane as the wind turned it. Then I was in the mill again; the wheels were turning and stretching out ghostly hands to draw me into the yawning maw of the machine. Then again, I found myself in a long, low, pitch-black corridor, followed by Something I could not see—Something that drove me to the mouth of a bottomless abyss. I would start up out of my half sleep, listen and look about me, then fall back again into an uneasy slumber.

Suddenly something fell from the ceiling onto the bed, and "buzz—buzz—buzz" sounded about my head. It was a huge fly which had been sleeping in a corner of my room and had been roused by the heat of the stove. It flew about in great circles, now around the bed, now in all four corners of the chamber—"buzz—buzz—buzz"—it was unendurable! At last I heard it creep into a bag of sugar which had been left on the window sill. I sprang up and closed the bag tight. The fly buzzed worse than ever, but I went back to bed and attempted to sleep again, feeling that I had conquered the enemy.

I began to count: I counted slowly to one hundred, two hundred, finally up to one thousand, and then at last I experienced that pleasant weakness which is the forerunner of true sleep. I seemed to be in a beautiful garden, bright with many flowers and odorous with all the perfumes of spring. At my side walked a beautiful young girl. I seemed to know her well, and yet it was not possible for me to remember her name, or even to know how we came to be wandering there together. As we walked slowly through the paths she would stop to pick a flower or to admire a brilliant butterfly swaying in the air. Suddenly a cold wind blew through the garden. The young girl trembled and her cheeks grew pale. "I am cold," she said to me, "do you not see? It is Death who is approaching us."

I would have answered, but in the same moment another stronger and still more icy gust roared through the garden. The leaves turned pale on the trees, the flowerets bent their heads, and the bees and butterflies fell lifeless to the earth. "That is Death," whispered my companion, trembling.

A third icy gust blew the last leaves from the bushes, white crosses and gravestones appeared between the bare twigs—and I was in the churchyard again and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane. Beside me stood a heavy brass-bound coffin with a metal plate on the cover. I bent down to read the inscription, the cover rolled off suddenly, and from out the coffin rose the form of the young girl who had been with me in the garden. I stretched out my arms to clasp her to my breast—then, oh horror! I saw the greenish-gleaming, empty eye sockets of the skull. I felt bony arms around me, dragging me back into the coffin. I screamed aloud for help and woke up.

My room seemed unusually light; but I remembered that it was a moonlight night and thought no more of it. I tried to explain the visions of my dream with various natural noises about me. The imprisoned fly buzzed as loudly as a whole swarm of bees; one half of my window had blown open, and the cold night air rushed in gusts into my room.

I sprang up to close the window, and then I saw that the strong white light that filled my room did not come from the moon, but seemed to shine out from the church opposite. I heard the chiming of the bells, soft at first, as if in far distance, then stronger and stronger until, mingled with the rolling notes of the organ, a mighty rush of sound struck against my windows. I stared out into the street and could scarcely believe my eyes. The houses in the market place just beyond were all little one-story buildings with bow windows and wooden eave troughs ending in carved dragon heads. Most of them had balconies of carved woodwork, and high stone stoops with gleaming brass rails.

But it was the church most of all that aroused my astonishment. Its position was completely changed. Its front turned toward our house where usually the side had stood. The church was brilliantly lighted, and now I perceived that it was this light which filled my room. I stood speechless amid the chiming of the bells and the roaring of the organ, and I saw a long wedding procession moving slowly up the center aisle of the church toward the altar. The light was so brilliant that I could distinguish each one of the figures. They were all in strange old-time costumes; the ladies in brocades and satins with strings of pearls in their powdered hair, the gentlemen in uniform with knee breeches, swords, and cocked hats held under their arms. But it was the bride who drew my attention most strongly. She was clothed in white satin, and a faded myrtle wreath was twisted through the powdered locks beneath her sweeping veil. The bridegroom at her side wore a red uniform and many decorations. Slowly they approached the altar, where an old man in black vestments and a heavy white wig was awaiting them. They stood before him, and I could see that he was reading the ritual from a gold-lettered book.

One of the train stepped forward and unbuckled the bridegroom's sword, that his right hand might be free to take that of the bride. She seemed about to raise her own hand to his, when she suddenly sank fainting at his feet. The guests hurried toward the altar, the lights went out, the music stopped, and the figures floated together like pale white mists.

But outside in the square it was still brighter than before, and I suddenly saw the side portal of the church burst open and the wedding procession move out across the market place.

I turned as if to flee, but could not move a muscle. Quiet, as if turned to stone, I stood and watched the ghostly figures that came nearer and nearer. The clergyman led the train, then came the bridegroom and the bride, and as the latter raised her eyes to me I saw that it was the young girl of the garden. Her eyes were so full of pain, so full of sad entreaty that I could scarce endure them; but how shall I explain the feeling that shot through me as I suddenly discovered that the right sleeve of her white satin gown hung empty at her side? The train disappeared, and the tone of the church bells changed to a strange, dry, creaking sound, and the gate below me complained as it turned on its rusty hinges. I faced toward my own door. I knew that it was shut and locked, but I knew that the ghostly procession were coming to call me to account, and I felt that no walls could keep them out. My door flew open, there was a rustling as of silken gowns, but the figures seemed to float in in the changing forms of swaying white mists. Closer and closer they gathered around me, robbing me of breath, robbing me of the power to move. There was a silence as of the grave—and then I saw before me the old priest with his gold-lettered book. He raised his hand and spoke with a soft, deep voice: "The grave is sacred! Let no one dare to disturb the peace of the dead."

"The grave is sacred!" an echo rolled through the room as the swaying figures moved like reeds in the wind.

"What do you want? What do you demand?" I gasped in the grip of a deathly fear.

"Give back to the grave that which belongs to it," said the deep voice again.

"Give back to the grave that which belongs to it," repeated the echo as the swaying forms pressed closer to me.

"But it's impossible—I can't—I have sold it—sold it at auction!" I screamed in despair. "It was buried and found in the earth—and sold for five marks eight shillings——"

A hideous scream came from the ghostly ranks. They threw themselves upon me as the white fog rolls in from the sea, they pressed upon me until I could no longer breathe. Beside myself, I threw open the window and attempted to spring out, screaming aloud: "Help! help! murder! they are murdering me!"

The sound of my own voice awoke me. I found myself in my night clothes on the window sill, one leg already out of the window and both hands clutching at the center post. On the street below me stood the night watchman, staring up at me in astonishment, while faint white clouds of mist rolled out of my window like smoke. All around outside lay the November fog, gray and moist, and as the fresh air of the early dawn blew cool on my face I felt my senses returning to me. I looked down at the night watchman—God bless him! He was a big, strong, comfortably fat fellow made of real flesh and blood, and no ghost shape of the night. I looked at the round tower of the church—how massive and venerable it stood there, gray in the gray of the morning mists. I looked over at the market place. There was a light in the baker shop and a farmer stood before it, tying his horse to a post. Back in my own room everything was in its usual place. Even the little paper bag with the sugar lay there on the window sill, and the imprisoned fly buzzed louder than ever. I knew that I was really awake and that the day was coming. I sprang back hastily from the window and was about to jump into bed, when my foot touched something hard and sharp.

I stooped to see what it was, felt about on the floor in the half light, and touched a long, dry, skeleton arm which held a tiny roll of paper in its bony fingers. I felt about again, and found still another arm, also holding a roll of paper. Then I began to think that my reason must be going. What I had seen thus far was only an unusually vivid dream—a vision of my heated imagination. But I knew that I was awake now, and yet here lay two—no, three (for there was still another arm)—hard, undeniable, material proofs that what I had thought was hallucination, might have been reality. Trembling in the thought that madness was threatening me, I tore open the first roll of paper. On it was written the name: "Sölling." I caught at the second and opened it. There stood the word: "Nansen." I had just strength enough left to catch the third paper and open it—there was my own name: "Simsen."

Then I sank fainting to the floor.

When I came to myself again, Niels Daae stood beside me with an empty water bottle, the contents of which were dripping off my person and off the sofa upon which I was lying. "Here, drink this," he said in a soothing tone. "It will make you feel better."

I looked about me wildly, as I sipped at the glass of brandy which put new life into me once more. "What has happened?" I asked weakly.

"Oh, nothing of importance," answered Niels. "You were just about to commit suicide by means of charcoal gas. Those are mighty bad ventilators on your old stove there. The wind must have blown them shut, unless you were fool enough to close them yourself before you went to bed. If you had not opened the window, you would have already been too far along the path to Paradise to be called back by a glass of brandy. Take another."

"How did you get up here?" I asked, sitting upright on the sofa.

"Through the door in the usual simple manner," answered Niels Daae. "I was on watch last night in the hospital; but Mathiesen's punch is heavy and my watching was more like sleeping, so I thought it better to come away in the early morning. As I passed your barracks here, I saw you sitting in the window in your nightshirt and calling down to the night watchman that some one was murdering you. I managed to wake up Jansen down below you, and got into the house through his window. Do you usually sleep on the bare floor?"

"But where did the arms come from?" I asked, still half bewildered.

"Oh, the devil take those arms," cried Niels. "Just see if you can stand up all right now. Oh, those arms there? Why, those are the arms I cut off your skeletons. Clever idea, wasn't it? You know how grumpy Sölling gets if anything interferes with his tutoring. You see, I'd had the geese sent me, and I wanted you to all come with me to Mathiesen's place. I knew you were going to read the osteology of the arm, so I went up into Sölling's room, opened it with his own keys and took the arms from his skeleton. I did the same here while you were downstairs in the reading room. Have you been stupid enough to take them down off their frames, and take away their tickets? I had marked them so carefully, that each man should get his own again."

I dressed hastily and went out with Niels into the fresh, cool morning air. A few minutes later we separated, and I turned toward the street where Sölling lived. Without heeding the protest of his old landlady, I entered the room where he still slept the sleep of the just. The arm, still wrapped in newspaper, lay on his desk. I took it up, put the mark piece in its place and hastened with all speed to the churchyard.

How different it looked in the early dawn! The fog had risen and shining frost pearls hung in the bare twigs of the tall trees where the sparrows were already twittering their morning song. There was no one to be seen. The churchyard lay quiet and peaceful. I stepped over the heaps of bones to where the heavy oaken coffin lay under a tree. Cautiously I pushed the arm back into its interior, and hammered the rusty nails into their places again, just as the first rays of the pale November sun touched a gleam of light from the metal plate on the cover.—Then the weight was lifted from my soul.

Otto Larssen

The Manuscript

TWO gentlemen sat chatting together one evening.

Their daily business was to occupy themselves with literature. At the present moment they were engaged in drinking whisky,—an occupation both agreeable and useful,—and in chatting about books, the theater, women and many other things. Finally they came around to that inexhaustible subject for conversation, the mysterious life of the soul, the hidden things, the Unknown, that theme for which Shakespeare has given us an oft-quoted and oft-abused device, which one of the men, Mr. X., now used to point his remarks. Raising his glass, he looked at himself meditatively in a mirror opposite, and, in a good imitation of the manner of his favorite actor, he quoted:

" There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in thy philosophy, Horatio."

Mr. Y. arranged a fresh glass for himself, and answered:

" I believe it. I believe also that it is given but to a few chosen ones to see these things. It never fell to my lot, I know. Fortunately for me, perhaps. For,—at least so it appears to me,—these chosen ones appear on closer investigation to be individuals of an abnormal condition of brain. As far as I personally am concerned, I know of nothing more strange than the usual logical and natural sequence of events on our globe. I confess things do sometimes happen outside of this orderly sequence; but for the cold-blooded and thoughtful person the Strange, the apparently Inexplicable, usually turns out to be a sum of Chance, that Chance we will never be quite clever enough to fully take into our calculations.

" As an instance I would like to tell you the story of what happened several years back to a friend of mine, a young French writer. He had a good, sincere mind, but he had also a strong leaning toward mysticism,—something which was just then in danger of becoming as much of a fashion in France as it is here now. The event of which I am about to tell you threw him into what was almost a delirium, which came near to robbing him of his normal intelligence, and therefore came near to robbing French readers of a few excellent books.

"This was the way it happened:

"It was about ten years back, and I was spending the spring and summer in Paris. I had a room with the family of a *concierge* on the left bank, rue de Vaugirard, near the Luxembourg Gardens.

"A few steps from my modest domicile lived my friend Lucien F. We had become acquainted through a chain of circumstances which do not belong to this story, but these circumstances had made firm friends of us, a friendship which was a source of great pleasure and also of assistance to me in my study of Paris conditions. This friendship also enabled me to enjoy better and cheaper whisky than one can usually meet with in the city by the Seine, a real good 'Jameson Highland.'

"Lucien F. had already published several books which had aroused attention through the oddity of their themes, and their gratifying success had made it possible for him to establish himself in a comfortably furnished bachelor apartment on the corner of the rue de Vaugirard and the rue de Condé.

"The apartment had a corridor and three rooms; a dining room, a bedroom, and a charming study with an inclosed balcony, the three windows of which,—a large one in the center and two smaller ones at the side,—sent a flood of light in over the great writing table which filled nearly the entire balcony. Inside the room, near the balcony, stood a divan covered with a bearskin rug. Upon this divan I spent many of my hours in Paris, occupied in the smoking of my friend's excellent cigars, and the sampling of his superlatively good whisky. At the same time I could lie staring up at the tops of the trees in the Luxembourg Gardens, while Lucien worked at his desk. For, unlike most writers, he could work best when he was not alone.

" If I remained away several days, he would invariably ring my bell early some morning, and drag me out of bed with the remark: ' The whisky is ready. I can't write if you are not there.'

" During the particular days of which I shall tell you, he was engaged in the writing of a fantastic novelette, ' The Force of the Wind,' a work which interested him greatly, and which he would interrupt unwillingly at intervals to furnish copy for the well-known newspaper that numbered him among the members of its staff. His books were printed by the same house that did the printing for the paper.

" Often, as I lay in my favorite position on the divan, the bell would ring and we would be honored by a visit from the printer's boy Adolphe, a little fellow in a blue blouse, the true type of Paris gamin. Adolphe rejoiced in a broken nose, a pair of crafty eyes, and had his fists always full of manuscripts which he treated with a carelessness that would have driven a literary novice to despair. The long rolls of yellow paper would hang out of his trousers pockets as if ready to fall apart at his next movement. And the disrespectful manner in which he crammed my friend Lucien's scarcely dried essay into the breast of his blouse would have certainly called forth remarks from a journalist of more self-conceit.

" But his eyes were so full of sly cunning, and there was such an atmosphere of Paris about the stocky little fourteen-year-old chap, that we would often keep him longer with us, and treat him to a glass of anisette to hear his opinion of the writers whose work he handled. He was an amusing cross between a tricky little Paris gamin and a real child, and he hit off the characteristics of the various writers with as keen a touch of actuality as he could put into his stories of how many centimes he had won that morning at ' craps ' from his friend Pierre. Pierre was another employee of the printing house, Adolphe's comrade in his study of the mysteries of Paris streets, and now his rival. They were both in love with the same girl, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the keeper of 'La Prunelle' Café, and her favor was often the prize of the morning's game.

"Now and then this rivalry between the two young Parisians would drop into a hand-to-hand fight. I myself was witness to such a skirmish one day, in front of 'La Prunelle.' The rivals pulled each other's hair mightily while the manuscripts flew about over the pavement, and Virginie, in her short skirts, stood at the door of the café and laughed until she seemed about to shake to pieces.

"Pierre was the strongest, and Adolphe came off with a bloody nose. He gathered up his manuscripts in grim silence and left the battlefield and the still laughing Virginie with an expression of deep anger on his wounded face.

"The following day, when I teased him a little because of his defeat, he smiled a sly smile and remarked:

"'Yes, but I won a franc from him, the big stupid animal. And so it was I, after all, who took Virginie out that evening. We went to the Café "Néant," where I let them put me in the coffin and pretend to be decaying, to amuse her. She thought it was lots of fun.'

"One morning Lucien had come for me as usual, put me on the divan, and seated himself at his writing table. He was just putting the last words to his novel, and the table was entirely covered with the scattered leaves, closely written. I could just see his neck as he sat there, a thin-sinewed, expressive neck. He bent over his work, blind and deaf for anything else. I lay there and gazed out over the tops of the trees in the park up into the blue summer sky. The window on the left side of the desk stood wide open, for it was a warm and sultry day. I sipped my whisky slowly. The air was heavy, and thunder threatened in the distance. After a little while the clouds gathered together, heavy, low-hanging, copper-hued, real thunder clouds, and the trees in the park rustled softly. The air was stifling, and lay heavy as lead on my breast.

"'Lucien!'

"Lucien did not hear or see anything, his pen flew over the paper.

"I fell back lazily on my divan.

"Then, suddenly, there was a mighty tumult. A strong gust of wind swept through the street, bending the trees in the gardens quite out of my horizon. With a crash the right-hand window in the balcony flew wide open, and like a cyclone, the wind swept through, clearing the table in an instant of all the loose sheets of paper that had lain scattered about it.

"'The devil! Why don't you shut the window!' I cried, springing up from the sofa.

"'Spare your energy, it's too late,' said Lucien with a gentle mockery in his soft voice. 'Look there!'—he pointed out into the street, where his sheets of paper went swirling about in the heavy air like white doves.

"A second later came the rain, a veritable cloud-burst. We shut the windows and gave ourselves up to melancholy thoughts about the lost manuscript, the recovery of which now seemed utterly hopeless.

"'That's one thousand francs, at least, that the wind has robbed me of,' sighed Lucien. 'Well, *enfin*, that doesn't matter so much. But do you know anything more tiresome than to work over the same subject a second time? I can't think of doing it. It would fairly make me sick to try it.'

"We were in a sad mood that morning. When we went out to breakfast at about two o'clock, we looked about for some traces of the lost manuscript.

"There was nothing to be seen. It had vanished completely, whirled off to all four corners of the earth probably, this manuscript from which Lucien had expected so much. Truly it was 'The Force of the Wind.'

. . . . .

"Now comes the strange part of the story. One morning, two weeks later, Lucien stood in the door of my little room, pale as a ghost. He had a bundle of printer's proofs in his hand, and held them out to me without a word.

"I looked at it and read:

"'"The Force of the Wind," by Lucien F.'

"It was a good bundle of proofs, the entire first proofs of Lucien's novel, that novel the manuscript of which we had seen blown out of the balcony window and whirled away by the winds.

"'My dear man,' I exclaimed, as I handed him back the proofs. 'You *have* been industrious indeed, to write your entire novel over again in so short a time—and to have proofs already——'

"Lucien did not answer. He stood silent, staring at me with a weird look in his otherwise so sensible eyes. After a moment he stammered:

"'I did not write the novel over again. I have not touched a pen since the day the manuscript blew out of the window.'

"'Are you a sleep-walker, Lucien?'

"'Why do you ask?'

"'Why, that would be the only natural explanation. They say we can do a great many things in sleep, of which we know nothing when we wake. I've heard queer stories of that. Men have committed murders in their sleep. It happens quite often that sleep-walkers write letters in a handwriting they do not recognize when awake.'

"'I have never been a sleep-walker,' answered Lucien.

"'Oh, you never can tell,' I remarked. 'Would you rather explain it as magic? Or as the work of fairies? Or do you believe in ghosts? Your muse has fascinated you, you mystic!' And I laughed and trilled a line from 'The Mascot,' which we had seen the evening before at the Lyric.

"But my merriment did not seem to strike an answering note in Lucien. He turned from me in silence, and with an offended expression took his hat and his proofs, and—humorist and skeptic as he was ordinarily, he parted from me with the words, uttered in a theatrical tone:

"'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in thy philosophy.'

"He turned on his heel and left the room.

"To be candid, I was unpleasantly affected by the little scene. I could not for an instant doubt Lucien's honesty,—he was so pale, so frightened almost—so touching in the alarm and excitement of his soul. Of course the only explanation that I could see was that he had written his novel in a sleep-walking state.

"For certainly no printer could set up type from a manuscript that did not exist,—to say nothing of printing it and sending out proofs.

"Several days passed, but Lucien did not come near me. I went to his place once or twice, but the door was locked. Had the devil carried him off bodily? Or had this strange and inexplicable occurrence robbed him of his sanity, and robbed me of his friendship and his excellent whisky?

"After three useless attempts to find him at home, and after writing him a letter which he did not answer, I gave up Lucien without any further attempt to understand his enigmatical behavior. A short time after, I left for my home without having seen or heard anything more of him.

. . . . .

"Months passed. I remained at home, and one evening when, during the course of a gay party, the conversation came around to the subject of mysticism and occult occurrences, I dished up my story of the enigmatical manuscript. The Unknown, the Occult, was the rage just then, and my story was received with great applause and called forth numerous quotations as to 'more things in heaven and earth.' I came to think so much of it myself that I wrote it out and sent it to Professor Flammarion, who was just then making a study of the Unknown, which he preserved in his later book 'L'Inconnu.'

"The occupying myself with the story brought my mind around again to memories of Lucien. One day, I saw a notice in *Le Figaro* to the effect that his book, 'The Force of the Wind,' had appeared in a second large edition, and had aroused much attention, particularly in spiritualistic circles. I seemed to see him again before me, with his long nervous neck, which was so expressive. The vision of this neck rose up before me whenever I drank the same sort of whisky that I had drunk so often with him, and the longing to hear something more of my lost friend came over me. I sat down one evening when in a sentimental mood, and wrote to him, asking him to tell me something of himself and to send me his book.

" A week later I received the little book and the following letter which I have here in my pocket. It is somewhat crumpled, for I have read it several times. But no matter. I will read it to you now, if you will pardon my awkward translating of the French original.

" Here it is:

" DEAR FRIEND:

" Many thanks for your letter. Here is the book. I have to thank you also that you did not lay my behavior of your last days in Paris up against me. It must have seemed strange to you. I will try to explain it.

" I have been nervous from childhood. The fact that most of my books have treated of fantastic subjects,—somewhat in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe—has made me more susceptible for all that world which lies beyond and about the world of every-day life. I have sought after,—and yet feared—the mystical; cool and lucid as I can be at times, I have always had an inclination for the enigmatical, the Unknown.

" But the first thing that ever happened in my life that I could not explain or understand was the affair of the manuscript. You remember the day I stood in your room? I must have looked the picture of misery. The affair had played more havoc with my nerves than you can very well understand. Your mockery hurt me, and yet under all I felt ashamed of my own thoughts concerning this foolish occurrence. I could not explain the phenomenon, and I shivered at the things that it suggested to me. In this condition, which lasted several weeks, I could not bear to see you or anyone else, and I was impolite enough even to leave your letter unanswered.

"The book appeared and made a hit, since that sort of thing was the center of interest just then. But almost a month passed before I could arouse myself from that condition of fear and—I had almost said, softening of the brain—which prevented my enjoyment of my success.

"Then the explanation came. Thanks to this occurrence I know now that I shall never again be in danger of being 'haunted.'

"And I know now that Chance can bring about stranger happenings than can any fancied visitations from the spirit world. Here you have the story of this 'mystic'. occurrence, which came near endangering my sanity, and which turns out to be a chance combination of a gust of wind, a sudden downpour of rain, and the strange elements in the character of our little friend Adolphe the printer's boy.

"You remember that funny little chap with the crafty eye, his talent for gambling, and his admiration for the girl of 'La Prunelle'? A queer little mixture this child who has himself alone to look to for livelihood and care, the typical race of the Paris streets, the modified gamin from 'Les Miserables.'

"About a month after the appearance of my book I lay on the divan one day,—your favorite place, you remember?—and lost myself in idle reasonings on the same old subject that never left my mind day or night, when the bell rang and Adolphe appeared, to call for the essay on 'Le Boulevarde.' There was an unusually nervous gleam in his eyes that day. I gave him an anisette and tried to find out what his trouble was. I did find it out, and I found out a good deal more besides.

"Thanks to his good fortune as a gambler, Virginie came to look upon him with favor. Pierre was quite out of the race and Adolphe's affection was reciprocated as much as his heart could desire. But with his good fortune in love came all the suffering, all the torture, the suspicions that tear the hearts of us men when we set our hopes upon a woman's truth. Young as he was he went through them all, and now he was torturing himself with the thought that she did not really love him and was only pretending, while she gave her heart to another. Perhaps he was right—why not?

" I talked to Adolphe as man to man, and managed to bring back a gleam of his usual jollity and sly humor. He took another glass of anisette, and said suddenly:

" ' M. Lucien—I did something——'

" ' Did what?' I asked.

" ' Something I should have told you long ago—it was wrong, and you've always been so nice to me——'

" You remember the day, two months ago, when we had such a sudden wind and rain storm, a regular cloud-burst? I was down here in this neighborhood fetching manuscripts from M. Labouchère and M. Laroy. I was to have come up here for copy from you, too. But then—you'll understand after all I've been telling you,—I came around past ' La Prunelle ' and Virginie stood in the doorway, and she'd promised to go out with me that evening. So I ran up to speak to her. And then when I went on again, I saw a sheet with your writing lying in the street. You know I know all the gentlemen's writing, whose copy I fetch. Then I was frightened. I thought to myself, ' The devil,' I thought, ' here I've lost M. Lucien's manuscript.' I couldn't remember calling for it, but I thought I must have done so before I got M. Laroy's. I can't remember much except Virginie these days. I took up the sheet and saw three others a little further on. And I saw a lot more shining just behind the railing of the Luxembourg Garden. You know how hard it rained. The water held the paper down, so the wind couldn't carry it any further. I ran into the Garden and picked up all the sheets, thirty-two of them. All of them, except the first four I found in the street, had blown in behind the railing. And I can tell you I was precious glad that I had them all together. I ran back to the office, told them I had dropped the manuscript in the street, but asked them not to say anything to you about it. But the sheets were all there,—you always number them so clearly, and 'handsome August,' the compositor, promised he wouldn't tell on me. I knew if the foreman heard of it, he'd put me out, for he had a grudge against me. So nobody knew anything about it. But I thought I ought to tell you, 'cause you've been so nice to me. Maybe you'll understand how one gets queer at times, when a girl like Virginie tells you she likes you better than Pierre, and yet you think she might deceive you for his sake—that big, stupid animal— But now I'll be going. Much obliged for your kindness, M. Lucien, and for the anisette—' And he left me.

"There you have the explanation, the very simple and natural explanation of the phenomenon that almost drove me crazy.

"The entire 'supernatural' occurrence was caused by a careless boy's love affairs, by a gust of southwest wind, by a sudden heavy rain, and by the chance that I had used English ink, the kind that water cannot blur. All these simple natural things made me act so foolishly toward a good friend, the sort of friend I have always known you to be. Let me hear from you, and tell me what you people up North think of my book. I give you my word that the 'Unknown Powers' shall never again make me foolish enough to risk losing your friendship!

"Yours

"LUCIEN."

"So this is my story. Yes, 'there are more things in heaven and earth—' But the workings of Chance are the strangest of all. And this whisky is really very good. Here's to you."

Bernhard Severin Ingemann

The Sealed Room

FOR many years there stood in a side street in Kiel an unpretentious old frame house which had a forbidding, almost sinister appearance, with its old-fashioned balcony and its overhanging upper stories. For the last twenty years the house had been occupied by a greatly respected widow, Madame Wolff, to whom the dwelling had come by inheritance. She lived there quietly with her one daughter, in somewhat straitened circumstances.

What gave the house a mysterious notoriety, augmenting the sinister quality in its appearance, was the fact that one of its rooms, a corner room on the main floor, had not been opened for generations. The door was firmly fastened and sealed with plaster, as well as the window looking out upon the street. Above the door was an old inscription, dated 1603, which threatened sudden death and eternal damnation to any human being who dared to open the door or efface the inscription. Neither door nor window had been opened in the two hundred years that had passed since the inscription was put up. But for a generation back or more, the partition wall and the sealed door had been covered with wall paper, and the inscription had been almost forgotten.

The room adjoining the sealed chamber was a large hall, utilized only for rare important events. Such an occasion arose with the wedding of the only daughter of the house. For that evening the great hall, as it was called, was brilliantly decorated and illuminated for a ball. The building had deep cellars and the old floors were elastic. Madame Wolff had in vain endeavored to avoid using the great hall at all, for the foolish old legend of the sealed chamber aroused a certain superstitious dread in her heart, and she rarely if ever entered the hall herself. But merry Miss Elizabeth, her pretty young daughter, was passionately fond of dancing, and her mother had promised that she should have a ball on her wedding day. Her betrothed, Secretary Winther, was also a good dancer, and the two young people combated the mother's prejudice against the hall and laughed at her fear of the sealed room. They thought it would be wiser to appear to ignore the stupid legend altogether, and thus to force the world to forget it. In spite of secret misgivings Madame Wolff yielded to their arguments. And for the first time in many years the merry strains of dance music were heard in the great hall that lay next the mysterious sealed chamber.

The bridal couple, as well as the wedding guests, were in the gayest mood, and the ball was an undoubted success. The dancing was interrupted for an hour while supper was served in an adjoining room. After the repast the guests returned to the hall, and it was several hours more before the last dance was called. The season was early autumn and the weather still balmy. The windows had been opened to freshen the air. But the walls retained their dampness and suddenly the dancers noticed that the old wall paper which covered the partition wall between the hall and the sealed chamber had been loosened through the jarring of the building, and had fallen away from the sealed door with its mysterious inscription.

The story of the sealed chamber had been almost forgotten by most of those present, forgotten with many other old legends heard in childhood. The inscription thus suddenly revealed naturally aroused great interest, and there was a general curiosity to know what the mysterious closed room might hide. Conjectures flew from mouth to mouth. Some insisted that the closed door must hide the traces of a hideous murder, or some other equally terrible crime. Others suggested that perhaps the room had been used as a hiding place for garments and other articles belonging to some person who had died of a pestilence, and that the room had been sealed for fear of spreading the disease. Still others thought that in the sealed chamber there might be found a secret entrance from the cellars, which had made the room available as a hiding place for robbers or smugglers. The guests had quite forgotten their dancing in the interest awakened by the sight of the mysterious door.

"For mercy's sake, don't let's go too near it!" exclaimed some of the young ladies. But the majority thought it would be great fun to see what was hidden there. Most of the men said that they considered it foolish not to have opened the door long ago, and examined the room. The young bridegroom did not join in this opinion, however. He upheld the decision of his mother-in-law not to allow any attempt to effect an entrance into the room. He knew that there was a clause in the title deeds to the house which made the express stipulation that no owner should ever permit the corner room to be opened. There was discussion among the guests as to whether such a clause in a title deed could be binding for several hundred years, and many doubted its validity at any time. But most of them understood why Madame Wolff did not wish any investigation, even should any of those present have sufficient courage to dare the curse and break open the door.

"Nonsense! What great courage is necessary for that?" exclaimed Lieutenant Flemming Wolff, a cousin of the bride of the evening. This gentleman had a reputation that was not of the best. He was known to live mostly on debt and pawn tickets, and was of a most quarrelsome disposition. As a duelist he was feared because of his specialty. This was the ability, and the inclination, through a trick in the use of the foils, to disfigure his opponent's face badly, without at all endangering his life. In this manner he had already sadly mutilated several brave officers and students, who had had the bad luck to stand up against him. He himself was anything but pleasant to look upon, his natural plainness having been rendered repellent by a life of low debauchery. He cherished a secret grudge against the bridegroom and bitter feelings toward the bride, because the latter had so plainly shown her aversion for him when he had ventured to pay suit to her.

The family had not desired any open break with this disagreeable relative, and had therefore sent him an invitation to the wedding. They had taken it for granted that, under the circumstances, he would prefer to stay away. But he had appeared at the ball, and, perhaps to conceal his resentment, he had been the most indefatigable dancer of the evening. At supper he had partaken freely of the strongest wines, and was plainly showing the effect of them by this time. His eyes rolled wildly, and those who knew him took care not to contradict him, or to have anything to say to him at all.

With a boastful laugh he repeated his assertion that it didn't take much courage to open a sealed door, especially when there might be a fortune concealed behind it. In his opinion it was cowardly to let oneself be frightened by a century-old legend. *He* wouldn't let that bother him if *he* had influence enough in the family to win the daughter and induce the mother to give a ball in the haunted hall. With this last hit he hoped to arouse the young husband's ire. But the latter merely shrugged his shoulders and turned away with a smile of contempt.

Lieutenant Wolff fired up at this, and demanded to know whether the other intended to call his, the lieutenant's, courage into question by his behavior.

" Not in the slightest, when it is a matter of obtaining a loan, or of mutilating an adversary with a trick at fencing," answered the bridegroom angrily, taking care, however, that neither the bride nor any of the other ladies should hear his words. Then he continued in a whisper: " But I don't believe you'd have the courage to remain here alone and in darkness, before this closed door, for a single hour. If you wish to challenge me for this doubt, I am at your disposal as soon as you have proven me in the wrong. But I choose the weapons."

" They must be chosen by lot, sir cousin," replied the lieutenant, his cheek pale and his jaws set. "I will expect you to breakfast to-morrow morning at eight o'clock."

The bridegroom nodded, and took the other's cold dry hand for an instant. The men who had overheard the short conversation looked upon it as a meaningless incident, the memory of which would disappear from the lieutenant's brain with the vanishing wine fumes.

The ball was now over. The bride left the hall with her husband and several of the guests who were to accompany the young couple to their new home. The lights went out in the old house. The door of the dancing hall had been locked from the outside. Lieutenant Flemming Wolff remained alone in the room, having hidden himself in a dark corner where he had not been seen by the servants, who had extinguished the lights and locked the door. The night watchman had just called out two o'clock when the solitary guest found himself, still giddy from the heavy wine, alone in the great dark hall in front of the mysterious door.

The windows were at only a slight elevation from the street, and a spring would take him to safety should his desire to remain there, or to solve the mystery of the sealed room, vanish. But next morning all the windows in the great hall were found closed, just as the servants had left them the night before. The night watchman reported that he had heard a hollow-sounding crash in that unoccupied part of the house during the night. But that was nothing unusual, as there was a general belief in the neighborhood that the house was haunted.

For hollow noises were often heard there, and sounds as of money falling on the floor, and rattling and clinking as of a factory machine. Enlightened people, it is true, explained these sounds as echoes of the stamping and other natural noises from a large stable just behind the old house. But in spite of these explanations and their eminent feasibility, the dread of the unoccupied portion of the house was so great that not even the most reckless man servant could be persuaded to enter it alone after nightfall.

Next morning at eight o'clock Winther appeared at his mother-in-law's door, saying that he had forgotten something of importance in the great hall the night before. Madame Wolff had not yet arisen, but the maid who let in the early visitor noticed with surprise that he had a large pistol sticking out of one of his pockets.

Winther had been to his cousin's apartment and found it locked. He now entered the great hall, and at first glance thought it empty. To his alarm and astonishment, however, he saw that the sealed door had been broken open. He approached it with anxiety, and found his wife's cousin, the doughty duelist, lying pale and lifeless on the threshold. Beside him lay a large stone which had struck his head in falling and must have killed him at once. Over the door was a hole in the wall, just the size of the stone. The latter had evidently rested on the upper edge of the door, and must certainly have fallen on its opening. The unfortunate man lay half in the mysterious chamber and half in the hall, just as he must have fallen when the stone struck him.

The formal investigation of the closed room was made in the presence of the police authorities. It contained nothing but a small safe which was built into the wall. When the safe had been opened by force, an inner chamber, which had to be broken open by itself, was found to contain a number of rolls of gold pieces, many jewels and numerous notes and I. O. U.'s. The treasure was covered by an old document. From this latter it was learned that the owner of the house two hundred years ago had been a silk weaver by the name of Flemming Ambrosius Wolff. He was said to have lent money on security for many years, but had died apparently a poor man, because he had so carefully hidden his riches that little of it was found after his death.

With a niggardliness that bordered on madness, he had believed that he could hide his treasure forever by shutting it up in the sealed room. The curse over the door was to frighten away any venturesome mortal, and further security was given by the clause in the title deed.

The universally disliked Lieutenant Flemming Wolff must have had many characteristics in common with this disagreeable old ancestor, to whose treasure he would have fallen heir had he not lost his life in the discovering of it. The old miser had not hidden his wealth for all eternity, as he had hoped, but had only brought about the inheriting of it by Madame Wolff, the owner of the house, and the next of kin. The first use to which this lady put the money was to tear down the uncanny old building and to erect in its stead a beautiful new home for her daughter and son-in-law.

Steen Steensen Blicher

The Rector of Veilbye

THESE extracts from the diary of Erik Sörensen, District Judge, followed by two written statements by the rector of Aalsö, give a complete picture of the terrible events that took place in the parish of Veilbye during Judge Sörensen's first year of office. Should anyone be inclined to doubt the authenticity of these documents let him at least have no doubt about the story, which is, alas! only too sadly true. The memory of these events is still fresh in the district, and the events themselves have been the direct cause of a change in the method of criminal trials. A suspected murderer is now tried through all the courts before his conviction can be determined. Readers versed in the history of law will doubtless know by this during what epoch the story is laid.

I

[*From the Diary of District Judge Erik Sörensen.*]

Now am I, unworthy one, by the grace of God made judge over this district. May the Great Judge above give me wisdom and uprightness that I may fulfill my difficult task in all humility! From the Lord alone cometh judgment.

It is not good that man should live alone. Now that I am able to support a wife I will look about me for a helpmeet. I hear much good said about the daughter of the Rector of Veilbye. Since her mother's death she has been a wise and economical keeper of her father's house. And as she and her brother the student are the only children, she will inherit a tidy sum when the old man dies.

Morten Bruus of Ingvorstrup was here to-day and wanted to make me a present of a fat calf. But I answered him in the words of Moses, "Cursed be he who taketh gifts." He is of a very quarrelsome nature, a sharp bargainer, and a boastful talker. I do not want to have any dealings with him, except through my office as judge.

I have prayed to God for wisdom and I have consulted with my own heart, and I believe that Mistress Mette Quist is the only woman with whom I could live and die. But I will watch her for a time in secret. Beauty is deceptive and charm is a dangerous thing. But I must say that she is the most beautiful woman I have yet seen.

I think that Morten Bruus a very disagreeable person—I scarcely know why myself. But whenever I see him something comes over me, something that is like the memory of an evil dream. And yet it is so vague and so faint, that I could not say whether I had really ever seen the man in my dreams or not. It may be a sort of presentiment of evil; who knows?

He was here again and offered me a pair of horses—beautiful animals—at a ridiculously low price. It looked queer to me. I know that he paid seventy thalers for them, and he wanted to let me have them for the same price. They are at the least worth one hundred thalers, if not more. Was it intended for a bribe? He may have another lawsuit pending. I do not want his horses.

I paid a visit to the Rector of Veilbye to-day. He is a fine, God-fearing man, but somewhat quick-tempered and dictatorial. And he is close with his money, too, as I could see. Just as I arrived a peasant was with him trying to be let off the payment of part of his tithe. The man is surely a rogue, for the sum is not large. But the rector talked to him as I wouldn't have talked to a dog, and the more, he talked the more violent he became.

Well, we all have our faults. The rector meant well in spite of his violence, for later on he told his daughter to give the man a sandwich and a good glass of beer. She is certainly a charming and sensible girl. She greeted me in a modest and friendly manner, and my heart beat so that I could scarcely say a word in reply. My head farm hand served in the rectory three years. I will question him,—one often hears a straight and true statement from servants.

A surprise! My farm hand Rasmus tells me that Morten Bruus came a-wooing to the rectory at Veilbye some years back, but was sent away with a refusal. The rector seemed to be pleased with him, for the man is rich. But his daughter would not hear to it at all. Pastor Sören may have tried hard to persuade her to consent at first. But when he saw how much she disliked the man he let her do as she would. It was not pride on her part, Rasmus said, for she is as simple and modest as she is good and beautiful. And she knows that her own father is peasant-born as well as Bruus.

Now I know what the Ingvorstrup horses were intended for. They were to blind the judge and to lead him aside from the narrow path of righteousness. The rich Morten Bruus covets poor Ole Anderson's peat moor and pasture land. It would have been a good bargain for Morten even at seventy thalers. But no indeed, my good fellow, you don't know Erik Sörensen!

Rector Sören Quist of Veilbye came to see me this morning. He has a new coachman, Niels Bruus, brother to the owner of Ingvorstrup. Neils is lazy and impertinent. The rector wanted him arrested, but he had no witnesses to back up his complaint. I advised him to get rid of the man somehow, or else to get along with him the best he could until the latter's time was up. The rector was somewhat hasty at first, but later on he listened calmly and thanked me for my good advice. He is inclined to be violent at times, but can always be brought to listen to reason. We parted good friends.

I spent a charming day in Veilbye yesterday. The rector was not at home, but Mistress Mette received me with great friendliness. She sat by the door spinning when I arrived, and it seemed to me that she blushed. It was hardly polite for me to wait so long before speaking. When I sit in judgment I never lack for words, but in the presence of this innocent maiden I am as stupid as the veriest simpleton of a chicken thief. But I finally found my voice and the time passed quickly until the rector's return. Then Mistress Mette left us and did not return until she brought in our supper.

Just as she stepped through the doorway the rector was saying to me, "Isn't it about time that you should think of entering into the holy estate of matrimony?" (We had just been speaking of a recent very fine wedding in the neighborhood.) Mistress Mette heard the words and flushed a deep red. Her father laughed and said to her, "I can see, my dear daughter, that you have been standing before the fire."

I shall take the good man's advice and will very soon try my fate with her. For I think I may take the rector's words to be a secret hint that he would not object to me as a son-in-law. And the daughter? Was her blush a favorable sign?

Poor Ole Anderson keeps his peat moor and his pasture land, but rich Morten Bruus is angry at me because of it. When he heard the decision he closed his eyes and set his lips tight, and his face was as pale as a whitewashed wall. But he controlled himself and as he went out he called back to his adversary, "Wish you joy of the bargain, Ole Anderson. The peat bog won't beggar me, and the cattle at Ingvorstrup have all the hay they can eat." I could hear his loud laughter outside and the cracking of his whip. It is not easy to have to sit in judgment. Every decision makes but one enemy the more.

Yesterday was the happiest day of my life. We celebrated our betrothal in the Rectory of Veilbye. My future father-in-law spoke to the text, " I gave my handmaid into thy bosom " (Genesis xvi, 5). His words touched my heart. I had not believed that this serious and sometimes brusque man could talk so sweetly. When the solemnity was over, I received the first kiss from my sweet betrothed, and the assurance of her great love for me.

At supper and later on we were very merry. Many of the dead mother's kin were present. The rector's family were too far away. After supper we danced until daybreak and there was no expense spared in the food and wine. My future father-in-law was the strongest man present, and could easily drink all the others under the table. The wedding is to take place in six weeks. God grant us rich blessings.

It is not good that my future father-in-law should have this Niels Bruus in his service. He is a defiant fellow, a worthy brother of him of Ingvorstrup. If it were I, he should have his wages and be turned off, the sooner the better. But the good rector is stubborn and insists that Niels shall serve out his time. The other day he gave the fellow a box on the ear, at which Niels cried out that he would make him pay for it. The rector told me of this himself, for no one else had been present. I talked to Niels, but he would scarcely answer me. I fear he has a stubborn and evil nature. My sweet betrothed also entreats her father to send the fellow away, but the rector will not listen to reason. I do not know what the old man will do when his daughter leaves his home for mine. She saves him much worry and knows how to make all things smooth and easy. She will be a sweet wife for me.

As I thought, it turned out badly. But there is one good thing about it, Niels has now run off of himself. The rector is greatly angered, but I rejoice in secret that he is rid of that dangerous man. Bruus will probably seek retaliation, but we have law and justice in the land to order such matters.

This was the way of it: The rector had ordered Niels to dig up a bit of soil in the garden. After a time when he went out himself to look at the work, he found Niels leaning on his spade eating nuts. He had not even begun to dig. The rector scolded him, but the fellow answered that he had not taken service as a gardener. He received a good box on the ear for that. At this he threw away his spade and swore valiantly at his master. The old rector lost his temper entirely, seized the spade and struck at the man several times. He should not have done this, for a spade is a dangerous weapon, especially in the hands of a man as strong as is the pastor in spite of his years. Niels fell to the ground as if dead. But when the pastor bent over him in alarm, he sprang up suddenly, jumped the hedge and ran away to the woods.

This is the story of the unfortunate affair as my father-in-law tells it to me. My beloved Mette is much worried about it. She fears the man may do harm to the cattle, or set fire to the house, or in some such way take his revenge. But I tell her there is little fear of that.

Three weeks more and my beloved leaves her father's house for mine. She has been here and has gone over the house and the farm. She is much pleased with everything and praises our orderliness. She is an angel, and all who know her say that I am indeed a fortunate man. To God be the praise!

Strange, where that fellow Niels went to! Could he have left the country altogether? It is an unpleasant affair in any case, and there are murmurings and secret gossip among the peasants. The talk has doubtless started in Ingvorstrup. It would not be well to have the rector hear it. He had better have taken my advice, but it is not my province to school a servant of God, and a man so much older than I. The idle gossip may blow over ere long. I will go to Veilbye to-morrow and find out if he has heard anything.

The bracelet the goldsmith has made for me is very beautiful. I am sure it will please my sweet Mette.

My honored father-in-law is much distressed and downhearted. Malicious tongues have repeated to him the stupid gossip that is going about in the district. Morten Bruus is reported to have said that "he would force the rector to bring back his brother, if he had to dig him out of the earth." The fellow may be in hiding somewhere, possibly at Ingvorstrup. He has certainly disappeared completely, and no one seems to know where he is. My poor betrothed is much grieved and worried. She is alarmed by bad dreams and by presentiments of evil to come.

God have mercy on us all! I am so overcome by shock and horror that I can scarcely hold the pen. It has all come in one terrible moment, like a clap of thunder. I take no account of time, night and morning are the same to me and the day is but a sudden flash of lightning destroying the proud castle of my hopes and desires. A venerable man of God—the father of my betrothed—is in prison! And as a suspected murderer! There is still hope that he may be innocent. But this hope is but as a straw to a drowning man. A terrible suspicion rests upon him— And I, unhappy man that I am, must be his judge. And his daughter is my betrothed bride! May the Saviour have pity on us!

It was yesterday that this horrible thing came. About half an hour before sunrise Morten Bruus came to my house and had with him the cotter Jens Larsen of Veilbye, and the widow and daughter of the shepherd of that parish. Morten Bruus said to me that he had the Rector of Veilbye under suspicion of having killed his brother Niels. I answered that I had heard some such talk but had regarded it as idle and malicious gossip, for the rector himself had assured me that the fellow had run away. "If that was so," said Morten, "if Niels had really intended to run away, he would surely at first come to me to tell me of it. But it is not so, as these good people can prove to you, and I demand that you shall hear them as an officer of the law."

"Think well of what you are doing," I said. "Think it over well, Morten Bruus, and you, my good people. You are bringing a terrible accusation against a respected and unspotted priest and man of God. If you can prove nothing, as I strongly suspect, your accusations may cost you dear."

"Priest or no priest," cried Bruus, "it is written, 'thou shalt not kill!' And also is it written, that the authorities bear the sword of justice for all men. We have law and order in the land, and the murderer shall not escape his punishment, even if he have the district judge for a son-in-law."

I pretended not to notice his thrust and began, "It shall be as you say. Kirsten Mads' daughter, what is it that you know of this matter in which Morten Bruus accuses your rector? Tell the truth, and the truth only, as you would tell it before the judgment seat of the Almighty. The law will demand from you that you shall later repeat your testimony under oath."

The woman told the following story: The day on which Niels Bruus was said to have run away from the rectory, she and her daughter were passing along the road near the rectory garden a little after the noon hour. She heard some one calling and saw that it was Niels Bruus looking out through the garden hedge. He asked the daughter if she did not want some nuts and told the women that the rector had ordered him to dig in the garden, but that he did not take the command very seriously and would much rather eat nuts. At that moment they heard a door open in the house and Niels said, "Now I'm in for a scolding." He dropped back behind the hedge and the women heard a quarrel in the garden. They could hear the words distinctly but they could see nothing, as the hedge was too high. They heard the rector cry, "I'll punish you, you dog. I'll strike you dead at my feet!" Then they heard several sounding slaps, and they heard Niels curse back at the rector and call him evil names. The rector did not answer this, but the women heard two dull blows and saw the head of a spade and part of the handle rise and fall twice over the hedge. Then it was very quiet in the garden, and the widow and her daughter were frightened and hurried on to their cattle in the field. The daughter gave the same testimony, word for word. I asked them if they had not seen Niels Bruus coming out of the garden. But they said they had not, although they had turned back several times to look.

This accorded perfectly with what the rector had told me. It was not strange that the women had not seen the man run out of the garden, for he had gone toward the wood which is on the opposite side of the garden from the highroad. I told Morten Bruus that this testimony was no proof of the supposed murder, especially as the rector himself had narrated the entire occurrence to me exactly as the women had described it. But he smiled bitterly and asked me to examine the third witness, which I proceeded to do.

Jens Larsen testified that he was returning late one evening from Tolstrup (as he remembered, it was not the evening of Niels Bruus's disappearance, but the evening of the following day), and was passing the rectory garden on the easterly side by the usual footpath. From the garden he heard a noise as of some one digging in the earth. He was frightened at first for it was very late, but the moon shone brightly and he thought he would see who it was that was at work in the garden at that hour. He put off his wooden shoes and pushed aside the twigs of the hedge until he had made a peep hole. In the garden he saw the rector in his usual house coat, a white woolen nightcap on his head. He was busily smoothing down the earth with the flat of his spade. There was nothing else to be seen. Just then the rector had started and partly turned toward the hedge, and the witness, fearing he might be discovered, slipped down and ran home hastily.

Although I was rather surprised that the rector should be working in his garden at so late an hour, I still saw nothing in this statement that could arouse suspicion of murder. I gave the complainant a solemn warning and advised him not only to let fall his accusation, but to put an end to the talk in the parish. He replied, "Not until I see what it is that the rector buried in his garden."

"That will be too late," I said. "You are playing a dangerous game. Dangerous to your own honor and welfare.

"I owe it to my brother," he replied, "and I demand that the authorities shall not refuse me assistance."

My office compelled me to accede to his demands. Accompanied by the accuser and his witnesses I took my way to Veilbye. My heart was very heavy, not so much because of any fear that we might find the missing man buried in the garden, but because of the surprise and distress I must cause the rector and my beloved. As we went on our way I thought over how severely the law would allow me to punish the calumniators. But alas, Merciful Heavens! What a terrible discovery was in store for me!

I had wished to have a moment alone with the rector to prepare him for what was coming. But as I drove through the gate Morten Bruus spurred his horse past me and galloped up to the very door of the house just as the rector opened it. Bruus cried out in his very face, "People say that you have killed my brother and buried him in your garden. I am come with the district judge to seek for him."

The poor rector was so shocked and astounded that he could not find a word to answer. I sprang from my wagon and addressed him: "You have now heard the accusation. I am forced by my office to fulfill this man's demands. But your own honor demands that the truth shall be known and the mouth of slander silenced."

"It is hard enough," began the rector finally, "for a man in my position to have to clear himself from such a suspicion. But come with me. My garden and my entire house are open to you."

We went through the house to the garden. On the way we met my betrothed, who was startled at seeing Bruus. I managed to whisper hastily to her, "Do not be alarmed, dear heart. Your enemies are going to their own destruction." Morten Bruus led the way to the eastern side of the garden near the hedge. We others followed with the rector's farm hands, whom he himself had ordered to join us with spades.

The accuser stood and looked about him until we approached. Then he pointed to one spot. "This looks as if the earth had been disturbed lately. Let us begin here."

"Go to work at once," commanded the rector angrily.

The men set to work, but they were not eager enough to suit Bruus, who seized a spade himself to fire them on. A few strokes only sufficed to show that the firm earth of this particular spot had not been touched for many years. We all rejoiced—except Bruus—and the rector was very happy. He triumphed openly over his accuser, and laughed at him, "Can't you find anything, you libeler?"

Bruus did not answer. He pondered for a few moments, then called out, "Jens Larsen, where was it you saw the rector digging?"

Jens Larsen had been standing to one side with his hands folded, watching the work. At Bruus's words he aroused himself as if from a dream, looked about him and pointed to a corner of the garden several yards from where we stood. "I think it was over there."

"What's that, Jens!" cried the rector angrily. "When did I dig here?"

Paying no heed to this, Morten Bruus called the men to the corner in question. The earth here was covered by some withered cabbage stalks, broken twigs, and other brush which he pushed aside hurriedly. The work began anew.

I stood by the rector talking calmly with him about the punishment we could mete out to the dastardly accuser, when one of the men suddenly cried out with an oath. We looked toward them; there lay a hat half buried in the loose earth. "We have found him," cried Bruus. "That is Niels's hat; I would know it anywhere."

My blood seemed turned to ice. All my hopes dashed to the ground. "Dig! Dig!" cried the bloodthirsty acaccuser, working himself with all his might. I looked at the rector. He was ghastly pale, staring with wide-open eyes at the horrible spot.

Another shout! A hand was stretched up through the earth as if to greet the workers. "See there!" screamed Bruus. "He is holding out his hand to me. Wait a little, Brother Niels! You will soon be avenged!"

The entire corpse was soon uncovered. It was the missing man. His face was not recognizable, as decomposition had begun, and the nose was broken and laid flat by a blow. But all the garments, even to the shirt with his name woven into it, were known to those who stood there. In one ear was a leaden ring, which, as we all knew, Niels Bruus had worn for many years.

"Now, priest," cried Morten Bruus, "come and lay your hand on this dead man if you dare to!"

"Almighty God!" sighed the rector, looking up to heaven, "Thou art my witness that I am innocent. I struck him, that I confess, and I am bitterly sorry for it. But he ran away. God Almighty alone knows who buried him here."

"Jens Larsen knows also," cried Bruus, "and I may find more witnesses. Judge! You will come with me to examine his servants. But first of all I demand that you shall arrest this wolf in sheep's clothing."

Merciful God, how could I doubt any longer? The truth was clear to all of us. But I was ready to sink into the earth in my shock and horror. I was about to say to the rector that he must prepare to follow me, when he himself spoke to me, pale and trembling like an aspen leaf. "Appearances are against me," he said, "but this is the work of the devil and his angels. There is One above who will bring my innocence to light. Come, judge, I will await my fate in fetters. Comfort my daughter. Remember that she is your betrothed bride."

He had scarcely uttered the words when I heard a scream and a fall behind us. It was my beloved who lay unconscious on the ground. I thought at first that she was dead, and God knows I wished that I could lie there dead beside her. I raised her in my arms, but her father took her from me and carried her into the house. I was called to examine the wound on the dead man's head. The cut was not deep, but it had evidently fractured the skull, and had plainly been made by a blow from a spade or some similar blunt instrument.

Then we all entered the house. My beloved had revived again. She fell on my neck and implored me, in the name of God, to help her father in his terrible need. She begged me by the memory of our mutual love to let her follow him to prison, to which I consented. I myself accompanied him to Grenaa, but with a mournful heart. None of us spoke a word on the sad journey. I parted from them in deep distress. The corpse was laid in a coffin and will be buried decently to-morrow in Veilbye churchyard.

To-morrow I must give a formal hearing to the witnesses. God be merciful to me, unfortunate man!

Would that I had never obtained this position for which I—fool that I am—strove so hard.

As the venerable man of God was brought before me, fettered hand and foot, I felt as Pilate must have felt as they brought Christ before him. It was to me as if my beloved—God grant her comfort, she lies ill in Grenaa—had whispered to me, "Do nothing against that good man!"

Oh, if he only were innocent, but I see no hope!

The three first witnesses repeated their testimony under oath, word for word. Then came statements by the rector's two farm hands and the dairy maid. The men had been in the kitchen on the fatal day, and as the windows were open they had heard the quarrel between the rector and Niels. As the widow had stated, these men had also heard the rector say, "I will strike you dead at my feet!" They further testified that the rector was very quick-tempered, and that when angered he did not hesitate to strike out with whatever came into his hand. He had struck a former hand once with a heavy maul.

The girl testified that on the night Jens Larsen claimed to have seen the rector in the garden, she had lain awake and heard the creaking of the garden door. When she looked out of the window she had seen the rector in his dressing gown and nightcap go into the garden. She could not see what he was doing there. But she heard the door creak again about an hour later.

When the witnesses had been heard, I asked the unfortunate man whether he would make a confession, or else, if he had anything to say in his own defense. He crossed his hands over his breast and said, "So help me God, I will tell the truth. I have nothing more to say than what I have said already. I struck the dead man with my spade. He fell down, but jumped up in a moment and ran away from the garden out into the woods. What may have happened to him there, or how he came to be buried in my garden, this I do not know. When Jens Larsen and my servant testify that they saw me at night in the garden, either they are lying, or Satan has blinded them. I can see this—unhappy man that I am—that I have no one to turn to for help here on earth. Will He who is in heaven be silent also, then must I bow to His inscrutable will." He bowed his head with a deep sigh.

Some of those present began to weep, and a murmur arose that he might possibly be innocent. But this was only the effect of the momentary sympathy called out by his attitude. My own heart indeed spoke for him. But the judge's heart may not dare to dictate to his brain or to his conscience. My conviction forced me to declare that the rector had killed Niels Bruus, but certainly without any premeditation or intention to do so. It is true that Niels Bruus had often been heard to declare that he would "get even with the rector when the latter least expected it." But it is not known that he had fulfilled his threat in any way. Every man clings to life and honor as long as he can. Therefore the rector persists in his denial. My poor, dear Mette! She is lost to me for this life at least, just as I had learned to love her so dearly.

I have had a hard fight to fight to-day. As I sat alone, pondering over this terrible affair in which it is my sad lot to have to give judgment, the door opened and the rector's daughter—I may no longer call her my betrothed—rushed in and threw herself at my feet. I raised her up, clasped her in my arms and we wept together in silence. I was first to control myself. "I know what you would say, dear heart. You want me to save your father. Alas, God help us poor mortals, I cannot do it! Tell me, dearest one, tell me truly, do you yourself believe your father to be innocent?"

She crossed her hands on her heart and sobbed, "I do not know!" Then she burst into tears again. "But he did not bury him in the garden," she continued after a few moments. "The man may have died in the wood from the blow. That may have happened——"

"But, dearest heart," I said, "Jens Larsen and the girl saw your father in the garden that night."

She shook her head slowly and answered, "The evil one blinded their eyes." She wept bitterly again.

"Tell me, beloved," she began again, after a while, "tell me frankly this much. If God sends us no further enlightenment in this unfortunate affair, what sentence must you give?"

She gazed anxiously at me, her lips trembling.

"If I did not believe," I began slowly, "that anyone else in my place would be more severe than I, then I would gladly give up my position at once and refuse to speak the verdict. But I dare not conceal from you that the mildest sentence that God, our king, and our laws demand is, a life for a life."

She sank to her knees, then sprang up again, fell back several steps as if afraid of me, and cried out: "Would you murder my father? Would you murder your betrothed bride? See here! See this!" She came nearer and held up her hand with my ring on it before my eyes. "Do you see this betrothal ring? What was it my father said when you put this ring upon my finger? 'I have given my maid unto thy bosom!' But you, you thrust the steel deep into my bosom!"

Alas, every one of her words cut deep into my own heart. "Dearest love," I cried, "do not speak so. You thrust burning irons into my heart. What would you have me do? Acquit him, when the laws of God and man condemn?"

She was silent, sobbing desperately.

"One thing I can do," I continued. "If it be wrong may God forgive me. If the trial goes on to an end his life is forfeited, there is no hope except in flight. If you can arrange an escape I will close my eyes. I will not see or hear anything. As soon as your father was imprisoned, I wrote to your brother in Copenhagen. He can arrive any moment now. Talk to him, make friends with the jailer. If you lack money, all I have is yours."

When I had finished her face flushed with joy, and she threw her arms about my neck. "God bless you for these words. Were my brother but here, he will know what to do. But where shall we go?" her tone changed suddenly and her arms dropped. "Even should we find a refuge in a foreign country I could never see you again!" Her tone was so sad that my heart was near to breaking.

"Beloved," I exclaimed, "I will find you wherever you may hide yourself! Should our money not be sufficient to support us I can work for us all. I have learned to use the ax and the hoe."

She rejoiced again and kissed me many times. We prayed to God to bless our undertaking and parted with glad hearts. I also hoped for the best. Doubts assail me, but God will find for us some light in this darkness.

Two more new witnesses. They bring nothing good, I fear, for Bruus announced them with an expression I did not like. He has a heart of stone, which can feel nothing but malice and bitterness. I give them a hearing to-morrow. I feel as if they had come to bear witness against me myself. May God strengthen my heart.

All is over. He has confessed.

The court was in session and the prisoner had been brought in to hear the testimony of the new witnesses. These men stated as follows: On the night in question they were walking along the path that led between the woods and the rectory garden. A man with a large sack on his back came out of the woods and walked ahead of them toward the garden. They could not see his face, but in the bright moonlight his figure was clearly visible, and they could see that he wore a loose green garment, like a dressing gown, and a white nightcap. The man disappeared through an opening in the rectory garden fence.

Scarcely had the first witness ended his statement when the rector turned ghastly pale, and gasped, in a voice that could scarcely be heard, "I am ill." They gave him a chair.

Bruus turned to his neighbor and exclaimed audibly, "That helped the rector's memory."

The prisoner did not hear the words, but motioned to me and said, "Lead me back to my prison. I will talk to you there." They did as he demanded.

We set out at once for Grenaa. The rector was in the wagon with the jailer and the gendarme, and I rode beside them.

When the door of the cell was opened my beloved was making up her father's bed, and over a chair by the bedside hung the fatal green dressing gown. My dear betrothed greeted me with a cry of joy, as she believed that I was come to set her father free. She hung about the old man's neck, kissing away the tears that rolled unhindered down his cheeks. I had not the heart to undeceive her, and I sent her out into the town to buy some things for us.

"Sit down, dear friend," said the rector, when we were alone. He seated himself on the bed, staring at the ground with eyes that did not see. Finally he turned toward me where I sat trembling, as if it were my own sentence I was to hear, as in a manner it was. "I am a great sinner," he sighed, "God only knows how great. His punishment crushes me here that I may enter into His mercy hereafter."

He grew gradually calmer and began:

"Since my childhood I have been hot-tempered and violent. I could never endure contradiction, and was always ready to give a blow. But I have seldom let the sun go down upon my wrath, and I have never borne hatred toward any man. As a half-grown boy I killed our good, kind watchdog in one of my fits of rage for some trifling offense, and I have never ceased to regret it. Later, as a student in Leipzig, I let myself be carried away sufficiently to wound seriously my adversary in one of our fencing bouts. A merciful fate alone saved me from becoming a murderer then. It is for these earlier sins that I am now being punished, but the punishment falls doubly hard, now that I am an old man, a priest, a servant of the Lord of

Peace, and a father! Ah, that is the deepest wound!" He sprang up and wrung his hands in deep despair. I would have said something to comfort him, but I could find no words for such sorrow.

When he had controlled himself somewhat he sat down again and continued: "To you, once my friend and now my judge, I will confess this crime, which it seems beyond a doubt that I have committed, although I am not conscious of having done so." (I was startled at this, as I had expected a remorseful confession.) "Listen well to what I shall now tell you. That I struck the unfortunate man with the spade, that he fell down and then ran away, this is all that I know with full consciousness. . . . What followed then? Four witnesses have seen that I fetched the body and buried it in my garden—and now at last I am forced to believe that it must be true. These are my reasons for the belief. "Three or four times in my life I have walked in my sleep. The last time—it may have been nine or ten years ago—I was to have held a funeral service on the following day, over the body of a man who had died a sudden and terrible death. I could not find a suitable text, until suddenly there came to me the words of an old Greek philosopher, 'Call no man fortunate until his death.' It was in my mind that the same idea was expressed in different words in the Holy Scriptures. I sought and sought, but could not find it. At last I went to bed much fatigued, and slept soundly. Next morning, when I sat down at my desk, to my great astonishment I saw there a piece of paper, on which was written, 'Call no man happy until his end hath come' (Sirach xi. 34), and following it was a funeral sermon, short, but as good in construction as any I have ever written. And all this was in my own handwriting. It was quite out of the question that anyone could have entered the room during the night, as I had locked it myself, and it had not been opened until I entered next day. I knew what had happened, as I could remember one or two such occurrences in my life before.

"Therefore, dear friend, when the last witnesses gave their testimony to-day, I suddenly remembered my sleep-walking exploits, and I also remembered, what had slipped my mind before, that on the morning after the night the body was buried I had found my dressing gown in the hall outside of my bedroom. This had surprised me, as I always hung it over a chair near my bed. The unfortunate victim of my violence must have died in the woods from his wound, and in my dream consciousness I must have seen this and gone to fetch the body. It must be so. I know no other explanation. God have mercy on my sinful soul." He was silent again, covering his face with his hands and weeping bitterly.

I was struck dumb with astonishment and uncertainty. I had always suspected that the victim had died on the spot where he was buried, although I could not quite understand how the rector had managed to bury the body by day without being seen. But I thought that he might have covered it lightly with earth and twigs and finished his work at night. He was a man of sufficient strength of mind to have done this. When the latest witnesses were telling their story, I noted the possible contradiction, and hoped it might prove a loophole of escape. But, alas, it was all only too true, and the guilt of the rector proven beyond a doubt. It was not at all impossible for a man to do such things in his sleep. Just as it was quite possible that a man with a fractured skull could run some distance before he fell to die. The rector's story bore the stamp of truth, although the doubt *will* come that he desired thus to save a shred of honor for his name.

The prisoner walked up and down the room several times, then stopping before me he said gravely: "You have now heard my confession, here in my prison walls. It is your mouth that must speak my sentence. But what says your heart?"

I could scarcely utter the words, "My heart suffers beyond expression. I would willingly see it break if I could but save you from a shameful death." (I dared not mention to him my last hope of escape in flight.)

"That is impossible," he answered. "My life is forfeited. My death is just, and shall serve as a warning to others. But promise me that you will not desert my poor daughter. I had thought to lay her in your arms"—tears choked his voice—"but, alas, that fond hope is vanished. You cannot marry the daughter of a sentenced murderer. But promise me that you will watch over her as her second father." In deep sorrow and in tears I held his hand in mine. "Have you any news from my son?" he began again. "I hope it will be possible to keep him in ignorance of this terrible affair until—until it is all over. I could not bear to see him now. And now, dear friend, let us part, not to meet again except in the hall of justice. Grant me of your friendship one last service, let it end soon. I long for death. Go now, my kind, sympathetic judge. Send for me to-morrow to speak my sentence, and send to-day for my brother in God, the pastor in Aalsö. He shall prepare me for death. God be with you."

He gave me his hand with his eyes averted. I staggered from the prison, hardly conscious of what I was doing. I would have ridden home without seeing his daughter had she not met me by the prison door. She must have seen the truth in my face, for she paled and caught at my arm. She gazed at me with her soul in her eyes, but could not speak. "Flee! Save your father in flight!" was all I could say.

I set spurs to my horse and rode home somehow.

To-morrow, then!

The sentence is spoken.

The accused was calmer than the judge. All those present, except his bitter enemy, were affected almost to tears. Some whispered that the punishment was too severe.

May God be a milder judge to me than I, poor sinner, am forced to be to my fellow men.

She has been here. She found me ill in bed. There is no escape possible. He will not flee. Everything was arranged and the jailer was ready to help. But he refuses, he longs for death. God be merciful to the poor girl. How will she survive the terrible day? I am ill in body and soul, I can neither aid nor comfort her. There is no word from the brother.

I feel that I am near death myself, as near perhaps as he is, whom I sent to his doom. Farewell, my own beloved bride. . . . What will she do? she is so strangely calm—the calm of wordless despair. Her brother has not yet come, and to-morrow—on the Ravenshill——!

Here the diary of Erik Sörensen stopped suddenly. What followed can be learned from the written and witnessed statements of the pastor of Aalsö, the neighboring parish to Veilbye.

II

It was during the seventeenth year of my term of office that the terrible event happened in the neighborhood which filled all who heard of it with shock and horror, and brought shame and disgrace upon our holy calling. The venerable Sören Quist, Rector of Veilbye, killed his servant in a fit of rage and buried the body in his garden.

He was found guilty at the official trial, through the testimony of many witnesses, as well as through his own confession. He was condemned to death, and the sentence was carried out in the presence of several thousand people on the little hill known as Ravenshill, here in the field of Aalsö.

The condemned man had asked that I might visit him in his prison. I must state that I have never given the holy sacrament to a better prepared or more truly repentant Christian. He was calm to the last, full of remorse for his great sin. On the field of death he spoke to the people in words of great wisdom and power, preaching to the text from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, chap. ii., verse 6: "He hath despised the priest in the indignation of his anger." He spoke of his violence and of its terrible results, and of his deep remorse. He exhorted his hearers to let his sin and his fate be an example to them, and a warning not to give way to anger. Then he commended his soul to the Lord, removed his upper garments, bound up his eyes with his own hand, then folded his hands in prayer. When I had spoken the words, " Brother, be of good cheer. This day shalt thou be with thy Saviour in Paradise," his head fell by the ax.

The one thing that made death bitter for him was the thought of his children. The son had been sent for from Copenhagen, but as we afterwards learned, he had been absent from the city, and therefore did not arrive until shortly after his father had paid the penalty for his crime.

I took the daughter into my home, where she was brought, half fainting, after they had led her father from the prison. She had been tending him lovingly all the days of his trial. What made even greater sorrow for the poor girl, and for the district judge who spoke the sentence, was that these two young people had solemnly plighted their troth but a few short weeks before, in the rectory of Veilbye. The son arrived just as the body of the executed criminal was brought into my house. It had been permitted to us to bury the body with Christian rites, if we could do it in secret. The young man threw himself over the lifeless body. Then, clasping his sister in his arms, the two wept together in silence for some while. At midnight we held a quiet service over the remains of the Rector of Veilbye, and the body was buried near the door of Aalsö church. A simple stone, upon which I have carved a cross, still stands to remind the passer-by of the sin of a most unfortunate man.

The next morning his two children had disappeared. They have never been heard of since. God knows to what far-away corner of the world they have fled, to hide their shame and their sorrow. The district judge is very ill, and it is not believed that he will recover.

May God deal with us all after His wisdom and His mercy!

O Lord, inscrutable are thy ways!

In the thirty-eighth year of my service, and twenty-one years after my unfortunate brother in office, the Rector of Veilbye had been beheaded for the murder of his servant, it happened one day that a beggar came to my door. He was an elderly man, with gray hair, and walked with a crutch. He looked sad and needy. None of the servants were about, so I myself went into the kitchen and gave him a piece of bread. I asked him where he came from. He sighed and answered:

" From nowhere in particular."

Then I asked him his name. He sighed still deeper, looked about him as if in fear, and said, " They once called me Niels Bruus."

I was startled, and said, " God have mercy on us! That is a bad name. That is the name of a man who was killed many years back."

Whereat the man sighed still deeper and replied: " It would have been better for me had I died then. It has gone ill with me since I left the country."

At this the hair rose on my head, and I trembled in every limb. For it seemed to me that I could recognize him, and also it seemed to me that I saw Morten Bruus before me in the flesh, and yet I had laid the earth over him three years before. I stepped back and made the sign of the cross, for verily I thought it was a ghost I saw before me.

But the man sat down in the chimney corner and continued to speak. " Reverend father, they tell me my brother Morten is dead. I have been to Ingvorstrup, but the new owner chased me away. Is my old master, the Rector of Veilbye, still alive? " Then it was that the scales fell from my eyes and I saw into the very truth of this whole terrible affair. But the shock stunned me so that I could not speak. The man bit into his bread greedily and went on. " Yes, that was all Brother Morten's fault. Did the old rector have much trouble about it? "

" Niels! Niels! " I cried from out the horror of my soul, " you have a monstrous black sin upon your conscience!

For your sake that unfortunate man fell by the ax of the executioner!"

The bread and the crutch fell from his hand, and he himself was near to falling into the fire. "May God forgive you, Morten!" he groaned. "God knows I didn't mean anything like that. May my sin be forgiven me! But surely you only mean to frighten me! I come from far away, and have heard nothing. No one but you, reverend father, has recognized me. I have told my name to no one. When I asked them in Veilbye if the rector was still there, they said that he was."

"That is the new rector," I replied. "Not he whom you and your sinful brother have slain."

He wrung his hands and cried aloud, and then I knew that he had been but a tool in the hands of that devil, Morten. Therefore I set to work to comfort him, and took him into my study that he might calm himself sufficiently to tell me the detail of this Satan's work.

This was the story as he tells it: His brother Morten —truly a son of Belial—cherished a deadly hatred toward pastor Sören Quist since the day the latter had refused him the hand of his daughter. As soon as he heard that the pastor's coachman had left him, he persuaded Niels to take the place.

"Watch your chance well," he had said, "we'll play the black coat a trick some day, and you will be no loser by it."

Niels, who was rough and defiant by nature, soon came to a quarrel with his master, and when he had received his first chastisement, he ran at once to Ingvorstrup to report it. "Let him strike you just once again," said Morten. "Then come to me, and we will pay him for it."

Then came the quarrel in the garden, and Niels ran off to Ingvorstrup. He met his brother in the woods and told him what had occurred.

"Did anyone see you on the way here?" asked Morten

Niels thought not. "Good," said Morten; "now we'l. give him a fright that he will not forget for a week or so."

He led Niels carefully to the house, and kept him hidden there the rest of the day. When all the household else had gone to sleep the two brothers crept out, and went to a field where several days before they had buried the body of a man of about Niel's age, size, and general appearance. (He had hanged himself, some said because of ill-treatment from Morten, in whose service he was. Others said it was because of unhappy love.) They dug up the corpse, although Niels did not like the work, and protested. But Morten was the stronger, and Niels had to do as he was ordered. They carried the body back with them into the house.

Then Niels was ordered to take off all his clothes, piece by piece, even to his shirt, and dress the dead man in them. Even his leaden earring, which he had worn for many years, was put in the ear of the corpse. After this was done, Morten took a spade and gave the head of the corpse two crashing blows, one over the nose, the other on the temple. The body was hidden in a sack and kept in the house during the next day. At night the day following, they carried it out to the wood near Veilbye.

Several times Niels had asked of his brother what all this preparation boded. But Morten answered only, "That is my affair. Do as I tell you, and don't ask questions."

When they neared the edge of the wood by Veilbye, Morten said, "Now fetch me one of the coats the pastor wears most. If you can, get the green dressing gown I have often seen him wear mornings."

"I don't dare," said Niels, "he keeps it in his bed chamber."

"Well, then, I'll dare it myself," said Morten. "And now, go your way, and never show yourself here again. Here is a bag with one hundred thalers. They will last you until you can take service somewhere in another country. Go where no one has ever seen you, and take another name. Never come back to Denmark again. Travel by night, and hide in the woods by day until you are well away from here. Here are provisions enough to last you for several days. And remember, never show yourself here again, as you value your life."

Niels obeyed, and has never seen his brother since that day. He had had much trouble, had been a soldier and lost his health in the war, and finally, after great trials and sufferings, had managed to get back to the land of his birth. This was the story as told me by the miserable man, and I could not doubt its truth.

It was now only too clear to me that my unfortunate brother in the Lord had fallen a victim to the hatred of his fiendish enemy, to the delusion of his judge and the witnesses, and to his own credulous imagination.

Oh, what is man that he shall dare to sit in judgment over his fellows! God alone is the Judge. He who gives life may alone give death!

I did not feel it my duty to give official information against this crushed and broken sinner, particularly as the district judge is still alive, and it would have been cruelty to let him know of his terrible error.

Instead, I gave what comfort my office permitted to the poor man, and recommended him not to reveal his name or tell his story to anyone in the district. On these conditions I would give him a home until I could arrange for a permanent refuge for him in my brother's house, a good distance from these parts.

The day following was a Sunday. When I returned from evening service at my branch parish, the beggar had disappeared. But by the evening of the next day the story was known throughout the neighborhood.

Goaded by the pangs of conscience, Niels had gone to Rosmer and made himself known to the judge as the true Niels Bruus. Upon the hearing of the terrible truth, the judge was taken with a stroke and died before the week was out. But on Tuesday morning they found Niels Bruus dead on the grave of the late rector Sören Quist of Veilbye, by the door of Aalsö church.

Hungarian Mystery Stories

Ferencz Molnar

The Living Death

THERE is a very serious reason, my dear sisters, why at last, after an absence of twenty years in America, I am confiding to you this strange secret in the life of our beloved and lamented father, and of the old house where we were children together. The truth is, if I read rightly the countenances of my physicians as they whisper to each other by the window of the chamber in which I am lying, that only a few days of this life remain to me.

It is not right that this secret should die with me, my dear sisters. Though it will seem terrible to you, as it has to me, it will enable you to better understand our blessed father, help you to account for what must have seemed to you to be strange inconsistencies in his character. That this secret was revealed to me was due to my indolence and childish curiosity.

For the first, and the last, time in my life I listened at a keyhole. With shame and a hotly chiding conscience I yielded to that insatiable curiosity—and when you have read these lines you will understand why I do not regret that inexcusable, furtive act.

I was only a lad when we went to live in that odd little house. You remember it stood in the outskirts of Rakos, near the new cemetery. It stood on a deep lot, and was roughly boarded on the side which looked on the highway. You remember that on the first floor, next the street, were the room of our father, the dining room, and the children's room. In the rear of the house was the sculpture studio. There we had the large white hall with big windows, where white-clothed laborers worked. They mixed the plaster, made forms, chiseled, scratched, and sawed. Here in this large hall had our father worked for thirty years.

When I arrived, in the holidays, I noted a change in our father's countenance. His beard was white, even when he did not work with the plaster. Through his strong spectacles his eyes glittered peculiarly. He was less calm than formerly. And he did not speak much, but all the more did he read.

Why, we all knew that after the passing away of our mother he became a bookworm, reading very often by candlelight until morning.

Then did it happen, about the fourth day after my arrival. I spent my leisure hours in the studio; I carved little figures, formed little pillar heads from the white plaster. In the corner a big barrel stood filled with water. It was noon; the laborers went to lunch.

I sat down close to the barrel and carved a Corinthian pillar. Father came into the studio and did not notice me. He carried in his hands two plates of soup. When he came into the studio he closed the door behind him and looked around in the shop, as though to make sure he was not observed. As I have said, he did not notice me. I was astonished. Holding my breath, I listened. Father went through the large hall, and then opened a small door, of which I knew only so much that it led into a chamber three steps lower than the studio.

I was full of expectation. I listened. I did not hear a word of conversation. Presently father came back with the empty plates in his hand. Somebody bolted the chamber's door behind him.

Father went out of the studio, and I, much embarrassed, crept from behind the barrel.

I knew that the chamber had a window, which looked back toward the plowed fields. I ran out of the studio and around the house. Much to my astonishment, the chamber's window was curtained inside. A large yellow plaid curtain hid everything from view. But I had to go, anyway, for I heard Irma's voice calling from the yard:

"Antal, to lunch!"

I sat down to the table with you, my sisters, and looked at father. He was sitting at the head of the table, and ate without saying a word.

Day after day I troubled my head about this mystery in the chamber, but said not a word to anybody. I went into the studio, as usual, but I did not notice anything peculiar. Not a sound came from the chamber, and when our father worked in the shop with his ten laborers he passed by the small door as if beyond it there was nothing out of the ordinary.

On Thursday I had to go back to Germany. On Tuesday night curiosity seized me again. Suddenly I felt that perhaps never would I know what was going on in my father's house. That night, when the working people were gone, I went into the studio. For a long time I was lost in my thoughts. All kinds of romantic ideas passed through my head, while my gaze rested on that small mysterious chamber door.

In the studio it was dark already, and from under the small door in a thin border a yellow radiance poured out. Suddenly I regained my courage. I went to the door and listened. Somebody was speaking. It was a man's voice, but I did not understand what he was saying. I was putting my ear close to the door, when I heard steps at the front of the studio. Father came.

I quickly withdrew myself behind the barrel. Father walked through the hall and knocked on the door softly. The bolt clicked and the door opened. Father went into the chamber and closed the door immediately and locked it.

Now all discretion and sense of honor in me came to an end. Curiosity mastered me. I knew that last year one part of this small room had been partitioned off and was used as a woodhouse. And I knew that there was a possibility of going into the woodhouse through the yard.

I went out, therefore, but found the woodhouse was closed. Driven by trembling curiosity, I ran into the house, took the key of the woodhouse from its nail, and in a minute, through the crevice between two planks, I was looking into that mysterious little room.

There was a table in the middle of the room, and beside the wall were two straw mattresses. On the table a lighted candle stood. A bottle of wine was beside it, and around the table were sitting father and two strangers. Both the strangers were all in black. Something in their appearance froze me with terror.

I fled in a panic of unreasoning fear, but returned soon, devoured by curiosity.

You, my sister Irma, must remember how I found you there, gazing with starting eyeballs on the same mysteriously terrifying scene—and how I drew you away with a laugh and a trifling explanation, so that I might return and resume my ghastly vigil alone.

One of the strangers wore a frock coat and had a sunburned, brown face. He was not old yet, not more than forty-five or forty-eight. He seemed to be a tradesman in his Sunday clothes. That did not interest me much.

I looked at the other old man, and then a shiver of cold went through me. He was a famous physician, a professor, Mr. H——. I desire to lay stress upon it that he it was, for I had read two weeks before in the papers that he had died and was buried!

And now he was sitting, in evening dress, in the chamber of a poor plaster sculptor, in the chamber of my father behind a bolted door!

I was aware of the fact that the physician knew father. Why, you can recall that when father had asthma he consulted Mr. H——. Moreover, the professor visited us very frequently. The papers said he was dead, yet here he was!

With beating heart and in terror, I looked and listened.

The professor put some shining little thing on the table.

"Here is my diamond shirt stud," he said to my father. "It is yours."

Father pushed the jewel aside, refusing the gift.

"Why, you are spending money on me," said the professor.

"It makes no difference," replied father; "I shan't take the diamond."

Then they were silent for a long while. At length the professor smiled and said:

"The pair of cuff buttons which I had from Prince Eugene I presented to the watchman in the cemetery. They are worth a thousand guldens."

And he showed his cuffs, from which the buttons were missing. Then he turned to the sunburned man:

"What did you give him, General Gardener?"

The tall, strong man unbuttoned his frock coat.

"Everything I had—my gold chain, my scarf pin, and my ring."

I did not understand all that. What was it? Where did they come from? A horrible presentiment arose in me. They came from the cemetery! They wore the very clothes in which they were buried!

What had happened to them? Were they only apparently dead? Did they awake? Did they rise from the dead? What are they seeking here?

They had a very low-voiced conversation with father. I listened in vain. Only later on, when they got warmed with their subject and spoke more audibly, did I understand them.

"There is no other way," said the professor. "Put it in your will that the coroner shall pierce your heart through with a knife."

Do you remember, my sisters, the last will of our father, which was thus executed?

Father did not say a word. Then the professor went on, saying:

"That would be a splendid invention. Had I been living till now I would have published a book about it. Nobody takes the Indian fakir seriously here in Europe. But, despite this, the buried fakirs, who are two months under ground and then come back into life, are very serious men. Perhaps they are more serious than ourselves, with all our scientific knowledge. There are strange, new, dreadful things for which we are not yet matured enough.

"I died upon their methods; I can state that now. The mental state which they reach systematically I reached accidentally. The solitude, the absorbedness, the lying in a bed month by month, the gazing upon a fixed point hour by haur—these are all self-evident facts with me, a deserted misanthrope.

"I died as the Indian fakirs do, and were I not a descendant of an old noble family, who have a tomb in this country, I would have died really.

"God knows how it happened. I don't think there is any use of worrying ourselves about it. I have still four days. Then we go for good and all. But not back, no, no, not back to life!"

He pointed with his hand toward the city. His face was burning from fever, and he knitted his brows. His countenance was horrible at this moment. Then he looked at the man with the sunburned face.

"The case of Mr. Gardener is quite different. This is an ordinary physician's error. But he has less than four days. He will be gone to-morrow or positively day after to-morrow."

He grasped the pulse of the sunburned man.

"At this minute his pulse beats a hundred and twelve. You have a day left, Mr. Gardener. But not back. We don't go back. Never!"

Father said nothing. He looked at the professor with seriousness, and fondly. The professor drank a glass of wine, and then turned toward father.

"Go to bed. You have to get up early; you still live; you have children. We shall sleep if we can do so. It is very likely that General Gardener won't see another morning. You must not witness that."

Now father began to speak, slowly, reverently.

"If you, professor, have to send word—or perhaps Mr.

Gardener—somebody we must take care of—a command, if you have——"

The professor looked at him sternly, saying but one word: "Nothing."

Father was still waiting.

"Absolutely nothing," repeated the professor. "I have died, but I have four days yet. I live those here, my dear old friend, with you. But I don't go back any more. I don't even turn my face backward. I don't want to know where the others live. I don't want life, old man. It is not honorable to go back. Go, my friend—go to bed."

Father shook hands with them and disappeared. General Gardener sat stiffly on his chair. The professor gazed into the air.

I began to be aware of all that had happened here. These two apparently dead men had come back from the cemetery, but how, in what manner, by what means? I don't understand it perfectly even now. There, in the small room, near to the cemetery, they were living their few remaining days. They did not want to go back again into life.

I shuddered. During these few minutes I seemed to have learned the meaning of life and of death. Now I myself felt that the life of the city was at a vast distance. I had a feeling that the professor was right. It was not worth while. I, too, felt tired, tired of life, like the professor, the feverish, clever, serious old man who came from the coffin and was sitting there in his grave clothes waiting for the final death.

They did not speak a word to each other. They were simply waiting. I did not have power to move away from the crack in the wall through which I saw them.

And now there happened the awful thing that drove me away from our home, never to return.

It was about half-past one when someone tapped on the window. The professor took alarm and looked at Mr. Gardener a warning to take no notice. But the tapping grew louder. The professor got up and went to the window. He lifted the yellow curtain and looked out into the night. Quickly he returned and spoke to General Gardener, and then both went to the window and spoke with the person who had knocked. After a long conversation they lifted the man through the window.

On this terrible day nothing could happen that would surprise me. I was benumbed. The man who was lifted through the window was clad in white linen to his feet. He was a Hebrew, a poor, thin, weak, pale Hebrew. He wore his white funeral dress. He shivered from cold, trembled, seemed almost unconscious. The professor gave him some wine. The Hebrew stammered:

"Terrible! Oh, horrible!"

I learned from his broken language that he had not been buried yet, like the professor. He had not yet known the smell of the earth. He had come from his bier.

"I was laid out a corpse," he whimpered. "My God, they would have buried me by to-morrow!"

The professor gave him wine again.

"I saw a light here," he went on. "I beg you will give me some clothes—some soup, if you please—and I am going back again." Then he said in German:

"Meine gute, theure Frau! Meine Kinder!" (My good wife, my children.)

He began to weep. The professor's countenance changed to a devilish expression when he heard this lament. He despised the lamenting Hebrew.

"You are going back?" he thundered. "But you won't go back! Don't shame yourself!"

The Hebrew gazed at him stupidly.

"I live in Rottenbiller Street," he stammered. "My name is Joseph Braun."

He bit his nails in his nervous agitation. Tears filled his eyes.

"Ich muss zu meine Kinder," he said in German again. (I must go to my children.)

"No!" exclaimed the professor. "You'll never go back!"

"But why?"

"I will not permit it!"

The Hebrew looked around. He felt that something was wrong here. His startled manner seemed to ask: "Am I in a lunatic asylum?" He dropped his head and said to the professor simply:

"I am tired."

The professor pointed to the straw mattress.

"Go to sleep. We will speak further in the morning."

Fever blazed in the professor's face. On the other straw mattress General Gardener now slept with his face to the wall.

The Hebrew staggered to the straw mattress, threw himself down, and wept. The weeping shook him terribly. The professor sat at the table and smiled.

Finally the Hebrew fell asleep. Hours passed in silence. I stood motionless looking at the professor, who gazed into the candlelight. There was not much left of it. Presently he sighed and blew it out. For a little while there was dark, and then I saw the dawn penetrating the yellow curtain at the window. The professor leaned back in his chair, stretched out his feet, and closed his eyes.

All at once the Hebrew got up silently and went to the window. He believed the professor was asleep. He opened the window carefully and started to creep out. The professor leaped from his chair, shouting:

"No!"

He caught the Hebrew by his shroud and held him back. There was a long knife in his hand. Without another word, the professor pierced the Hebrew through the heart.

He put the limp body on the straw mattress, then went out of the chamber toward the studio. In a few minutes he came back with father. Father was pale and did not speak. They covered the dead Hebrew with a rug, and then, one after the other, crept out through the window, lifted the corpse out, and carried it away. In a quarter of an hour they came back. They exchanged a few words, from which I learned that they had succeeded in putting the dead Hebrew back on his bier without having been observed.

They shut the window. The professor drank a glass of wine and again stretched out his legs on the chair.

"It is impossible to go back," he said. "It is not allowed."

Father went away. I did not see him any more. I staggered up to my room, went to bed, and slept immediately. The next day I got up at ten o'clock. I left the city at noon.

Since that time, my dear sisters, you have not seen me. I don't know anything more. At this minute I say to myself that what I know, what I have set down here, is not true. Maybe it never happened, maybe I have dreamed it all. I am not clear in my mind. I have a fever.

But I am not afraid of death. Here, on my hospital bed, I see the professor's feverish but calm and wise face. When he grasped the Hebrew by the throat he looked like a lover of Death, like one who has a secret relation with the passing of life, who advocates the claims of Death, and who punishes him who would cheat Death.

Now Death urges his claim upon me. I have no desire to cheat him—I am so tired, so very tired.

God be with you, my dear sisters.

Maurus Jokai

Thirteen at Table

WE are far amidst the snow-clad mountains of Transylvania.

The scenery is magnificent. In clear weather, the plains of Hungary as far as the Rez promontory may be seen from the summit of the mountains. Groups of hills rise one above the other, covered with thick forest, which, at the period when our tale commences, had just begun to assume the first light green of spring.

Toward sunset, a slight purple mist overspread the farther pinnacles, leaving their ridges still tinged with gold. On the side of one of these hills the white turrets of an ancient family mansion gleamed from amid the trees.

Its situation was peculiarly romantic. A steep rock descended on one side, on whose pinnacle rose a simple cross. In the depth of the valley beneath lay a scattered village, whose evening bells melodiously broke the stillness of nature.

Farther off, some broken roofs arose among the trees, from whence the sound of the mill, and the yellow-tinted stream, betrayed the miners' dwellings.

Through the meadows in the valley beneath a serpentine rivulet wound its silvery way, interrupted by numerous falls and huge blocks of stone, which had been carried down in bygone ages from the mountains during the melting of the snows.

A little path, cut in the side of the rock, ascended to the castle; while higher up, a broad road, somewhat broken by the mountain streams, conducted across the hills to more distant regions.

The castle itself was an old family mansion, which had received many additions at different periods, as the wealth or necessities of the family suggested.

It was surrounded by groups of ancient chestnut trees, and the terrace before the court was laid out in gardens, which were now filled with anemones, hyacinths, and other early flowers. Now and then the head of a joyous child appeared at the windows, which were opened to admit the evening breeze; while various members of the household retinue were seen hastening through the corridors, or standing at the doors in their embroidered liveries.

The castle was completely surrounded by a strong railwork of iron, the stone pillars were overgrown by the evergreen leaves of the gobea and epomœa.

It was the early spring of 1848.

A party, consisting of thirteen persons, had assembled in the dining-room. They were all members of one family, and all bore the name of Bardy.

At the head of the board sat the grandmother, an old lady of eighty years of age, whose snow-white hair was dressed according to the fashion of her times beneath her high white cap. Her face was pale and much wrinkled, and the eyes turned constantly upwards, as is the case with persons who have lost their sight. Her hand and voice trembled with age, and there was something peculiarly striking in the thick snow-white eyebrows.

On her right hand sat her eldest son, Thomas Bardy, a man of between fifty and sixty. With a haughty and commanding countenance, penetrating glance, lofty figure, and noble mien, he was a true type of that ancient aristocracy which is now beginning to die out.

Opposite to him, at the old lady's left hand, sat the darling of the family—a lovely girl of about fifteen. Her golden hair fell in luxuriant tresses round a countenance of singular beauty and sweetness. The large and lustrous deep-blue eyes were shaded by long dark lashes, and her complexion was pale as the lily, excepting when she smiled or spoke, and a slight flush like the dawn of morning overspread her cheeks.

Jolanka was the orphan child of a distant relative, whom the Bardys had adopted. They could not allow one who bore their name to suffer want; and it seemed as if each member of the family had united to heap affection and endearment on the orphan girl, and thus prevented her from feeling herself a stranger among them.

There were still two other female members of the family: Katalin, the old lady's daughter, who had been for many years a widow; and the wife of one of her sons, a pretty young woman, who was trying to teach a little prattler at her side to use the golden spoon which she had placed in his small, fat hand, while he laughed and crowed, and the family did their best to guess what he said, or what he most preferred.

Opposite to them there sat two gentlemen. One of them was the husband of the young mother. Jozsef Bardy—a handsome man of about thirty-five, with regular features, and black hair and beard; a constant smile beamed on his gay countenance, while he playfully addressed his little son and gentle wife across the table. The other was his brother, Barnabas—a man of herculean form and strength. His face was marked by smallpox; he wore neither beard or mustache, and his hair was combed smoothly back, like a peasant's. His disposition was melancholy and taciturn; but he seemed constantly striving to atone, by the amiability of his manners, for an unprepossessing exterior.

Next to him sat a little cripple, whose pale countenance bore that expression of suffering sweetness so peculiar to the deformed, while his lank hair, bony hands, and misshapen shoulders awakened the beholder's pity. He, too, was an orphan—a grandchild of the old lady's; his parents had died some years before.

Two little boys of about five years old sat opposite to him. They were dressed alike, and the resemblance between them was so striking that they were constantly mistaken. They were twin-children of the young couple.

At the lower end of the table sat Imre Bardy, a young man of twenty, whose handsome countenance was full of life and intelligence, his figure manly and graceful, and his manner courteous and agreeable. A slight moustache was beginning to shade his upper lip, and his dark hair fell in natural ringlets around his head. He was the only son of the *majoresco,* Tamas Bardy, and resembled him much in form and feature.

Beside him sat an old gentleman, with white hair and ruddy complexion. This was Simon Bardy, an ancient relative, who had grown old with the grandmother of the family.

The same peculiarity characterized every countenance in the Bardy family—namely the lofty forehead and marked brows, and the large deep-blue eyes, shaded by their heavy dark lashes.*

"How singular!" exclaimed one of the party; "we are thirteen at table to-day."

"One of us will surely die," said the old lady; and there was a mournful conviction in the faint, trembling tones.

"Oh, no, grandmother, we are only twelve and a half!" exclaimed the young mother, taking the little one on her knee.

"This little fellow only counts half on the railroad."

All the party laughed at this remark, even the little cripple's countenance relaxed into a sickly smile.

"Ay, ay," continued the old lady, "the trees are now putting forth their verdure, but at the fall of the leaf who knows if all of us, or any of us, may still be sitting here?"

Several months had passed since this slight incident.

In one of the apartments of the castle, the eldest Bardy and his son were engaged in earnest conversation.

The father paced hastily up and down the apartment, now and then stopping short to address his son, who stood in the embrasure of one of the windows. The latter wore the dress of the Matyas Hussars†—a gray dolmany, with crimson cord; he held a crimson esako, with a tricolored cockade, in his hand.

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* There is a race of the Hungarians in the Carpath who, unlike the Hungarians of the plain, have blue eyes and often fair hair.

† Part of the free corps raised in 1848.

"Go," said the father, speaking in broken accents; "the sooner the better; let me not see you! Do not think I speak in anger, but I cannot bear to look at you, and think where you are going. You are my only son, and you know how I have loved you—how all my hopes have been concentrated in you. But do not think that these tears, which you see me shed for the first time, are on your account; for if I knew I should lose you,—if your blood were to flow at the next battle,—I should only bow my head in dust and say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord takes away, blessed be His holy name!' Yes, if I heard that you and your infatuated companions were cut to pieces, I could stifle the burning tears; but to know that your blood, when it flows, will be a curse upon the earth, and your death will be the death of two kingdoms——"

"They may die now; but they will regenerate——"

"This is not true; you only deceive yourselves with the idea that you can build up a new edifice when you have overthrown the old one. Great God, what sacrilege! Who had intrusted you with the fate of our country, to tempt the Almighty? Who authorized you to lose all there is for the hope of what may be? For centuries past have so many honorable men fought in vain to uphold the old tottering constitution, as you call it? Or were they not true patriots and heroes? Your companions have hissed their persecuted countrymen in the Diet; but do they love their country better than we do, who have shed our blood and sacrificed our interests for her from generation to generation, and even suffered disgrace, if necessary, to keep her in life?—for though that life has been gradually weakened, still it is life. You promise her glory; but the name of glory is death!"

"It may be so, father; we may lose our country as regards ourselves, but we give one instead of ten millions, who were hitherto our own people, and yet strangers in their native land."

"Chimera! The people will not understand you. They never even dreamt of what you wish to give them. The true way to seek the people's welfare is to give them what they need.

"Ask my dependents! Is there one among them whom I have allowed to suffer want or ruin, whom I have not assisted in times of need?—or have I ever treated them unjustly? You will not hear a murmur. Tell them that I am unjust notwithstanding, because I do not call the peasant from his plow to give his opinions on forming the laws, and constitution,—and what will be the consequence? They will stare at you in astonishment; and yet, in their mistaken wrath, they will come down some night and burn this house over my head."

"That is the unnatural state of the times. It is all the fault of the past bad management, if the people have no better idea. But let the peasant once be free, let him be a man, and he will understand all that is now strange to him."

"But that freedom will cost the lives of thousands!"

"I do not deny it. Indeed, I believe that neither I nor any of the present generation will reap the fruits of this movement. I think it probable that in a few years not one of those whose names we now hear spoken of may still be living; and what is more, disgrace and curses may be heaped upon their dust. But a time will come when the great institutions of which they have laid the foundation will arise and render justice to the memory of those who sacrificed themselves for the happiness of future generations. To die for our country is a glorious death, but to carry with us the curses of thousands, to die despised and hated for the salvation of future millions, oh! that is sublime—it is Messiah-like!"

"My son—my only son!" cried his father, throwing himself passionately on the young man's neck and sobbing bitterly. "Do you see these tears?"

"For the first time in my life I see them, father—I see you weep; my heart can scarcely bear the weight of these tears—and yet I go! You have reason to weep, for I bring neither joy nor glory on your head—and yet I go! A feeling stronger than the desire of glory, stronger than the love of my country, inspires my soul; and it is a proof of the strength of my faith that I see your tears, my father—and yet I go!"

"Go!" murmured his father, in a voice of despair. "You may never return again, or, when you do, you may find neither your father's house nor the grave in which he is laid! But know, even then, in the hour of your death, or in the hour of mine, I do not curse you—and now, leave me." With these words he turned away and motioned to his son to depart.

Imre silently left the apartment, and as soon as he had closed the door the tears streamed from his eyes; but before his sword had struck the last step his countenance had regained its former determination, and the fire of enthusiasm had kindled in his eye.

He then went to take leave of his Uncle Jozsef, whom he found surrounded by his family. The twins were sitting at his feet, while his wife was playing bo-peep with the little one, who laughed and shouted, while his mother hid herself behind his father's armchair.

Imre's entrance interrupted the general mirth. The little boy ran over to examine the sword and golden tassels, while the little one began to cry in alarm at the sight of the strange dress.

"Csitt, baba!" said his mother, taking him from his father's arms; "your cousin is going to wars, and will bring you a golden horse."

Jozsef wrung his nephew's hand. "God be with you!" he exclaimed, and added in a lower voice, "You are the noblest of us all—you have done well!"

They then all embraced him in turns, and Imre left them, amidst clamors of the little ones, and proceeded to his grandmother's apartments.

On the way, he met his Uncle Barnabas, who embraced him again and again in silence, and then tore himself away without saying a word.

The old lady sat in her great armchair, which she seldom quitted, and as she heard the clash of Imre's sword, she looked up and asked who was coming.

"It is Imre!" said the fair-haired maiden, blushing, and her heart beat quickly as she pronounced his name.

Jolanka felt that Imre was more than a brother to her, and the feeling with which she had learnt to return his affection was warmer than even a sister's love.

The widow lady and the cripple were also in the grandmother's apartment; the child sat on a stool at the old lady's feet, and smiled sadly as the young man entered.

"Why that sword at your side, Imre?" asked the old lady in a feeble voice. "Ah, this is no good world—no good world! But if God is against us, who can resist His hand? I have spoken with the dead again in dreams. I thought they all came around me and beckoned me to follow them; but I am ready to go, and place my life with gratitude and confidence in the hands of the Lord. Last night I saw the year 1848 written in the skies in letters of fire. Who knows what may come over us yet? This is no good world—no good world!"

Imre bent silently over the old lady's hand and kissed it.

"And so you are going? Well, God bless and speed you, if you go beneath the cross, and never forget in life or in death to raise your heart to the Lord;" and the old lady placed her withered hand upon her grandson's head, and murmured, "God Almighty bless you!"

"My husband was just such a handsome youth when I lost him," sighed the widow lady as she embraced her nephew. "God bless you!"

The little cripple threw his arms around his cousin's knees and, sobbing, entreated him not to stay long away.

The last who bade farewell was Jolanka. She approached with downcast eyes, holding in her small white hands an embroidered cockade, which she placed on his breast. It was composed of five colors—blue and gold, red, white, and green.*

"I understand," said the young man, in a tone of joyful surprise, as he pressed the sweet girl to his heart, "Erdely* and Hungary united! I shall win glory for your colors!"

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* Blue and gold are the colors of Transylvania.

The maiden yielded to his warm embrace, murmuring, as he released her, "Remember me!"

"When I cease to remember you, I shall be no more," replied the youth fervently.

And then he kissed the young girl's brow, and once more bidding farewell, he hurried from the apartment.

Old Simon Bardy lived on the first floor: Imre did not forget him.

"Well, nephew," said the old man cheerfully, "God speed you, and give you strength to cut down many Turks!"

"It is not with the Turks that we shall have to do," replied the young man, smiling.

"Well, with the French," said the old soldier of the past century, correcting himself.

A page waited at the gate with two horses saddled and bridled.

"I shall not require you—you may remain at home," said Imre, as, taking the bridle of one of the horses, vaulting lightly into the saddle, he pressed his csako over his brow and galloped from the castle.

As he rode under the cross, he checked his horse and looked back. Was it of his grandmother's words, or of the golden-haired Jolanka that he thought?

A white handkerchief waved from the window.

"Farewell, light of my soul!" murmured the youth; and kissing his hand, he once more dashed his spurs into his horse's flank, and turned down the steep hill.

Those were strange times. All at once the villages began to be depopulated; the inhabitants disappeared, none knew whither. The doors of the houses were closed.

The bells were no longer heard in the evening, nor the maiden's song as she returned from her work. The barking of dogs which had lost their masters alone interrupted the silence of the streets, where the grass began to grow.

Imre Bardy rode through the streets of the village without meeting a soul; few of the chimneys had smoke, and no fires gleamed through the kitchen windows.

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* Transylvania.

Evening was drawing on, and a slight transparent mist had overspread the valley. Imre was desirous of reaching Kolozsvar * early on the next morning, and continued his route all night.

About midnight the moon rose behind the trees, shedding her silvery light over the forest. All was still, excepting the echo of the miner's hammer, and the monotonous sound of his horse's step along the rocky path. He rode on, lost in thought; when suddenly the horse stopped short, and pricked his ears.

"Come, come," said Imre, stroking his neck, "you have not heard the cannon yet."

The animal at last proceeded, turning his head impatiently from side to side, and snorting and neighing with fear.

The road now led through a narrow pass between two rocks, whose summits almost met, and a slight bridge, formed of one or two rotten planks, was thrown across the dry channel of a mountain stream which cut up the path.

As Imre reached the bridge, the horse backed, and no spurring could induce him to cross. Imre at last pressed his knee angrily against the trembling animal, striking him at the same time across the neck with the bridle, on which the horse suddenly cleared the chasm at one bound and then again turned and began to back.

At that instant a fearful cry arose from beneath, which was echoed from the rocks around, and ten or fifteen savage-looking beings climbed from under the bridge, with lances formed of upright scythes.

Even then there would have been time for the horseman to turn back, and dash through a handful of men behind him, but either he was ashamed of turning from the first conflict, or he was desirous, at any risk, to reach Kolozsvar at the appointed time, and instead of retreating by the bridge, he galloped towards the other end of the pass, where the enemy rushed upon him from every side, yelling hideously.

* Klausenburg.

"Back, Wallachian dogs!" cried Imre, cutting two of them down, while several others sprang forward with the scythes.

Two shots whistled by, and Imre, letting go the bridle, cut right and left, his sword gleaming rapidly among the awkward weapons; and taking advantage of a moment in which the enemy's charge began to slacken, he suddenly dashed through the crowd towards the outlet of the rock, without perceiving that another party awaited him above the rocks with great stones, with which they prepared to crush him as he passed.

He was only a few paces from the spot, when a gigantic figure, armed with a short broad-axe, and with a Roman helmet on his head, descended from the rock in front of him, and seizing the reins of the horse forced him to halt. The young man aimed a blow at his enemy's head, and the helmet fell back, cut through the middle, but the force of the blow had broken his sword in two; and the horse lifted by his giant foe, reared, so that the rider, losing his balance, was thrown against the side of the rock, and fell senseless to the ground.

At the same instant a shot was fired toward them from the top of the rock.

"Who fired there?" cried the giant, in a voice of thunder. The bloodthirsty Wallachians would have rushed madly on their defenseless prey, had not the giant stood between him and them.

"Who fired on me?" he sternly exclaimed. The Wallachians stood back in terror.

"It was not on you, Decurio, that I fired, but on the hussar," stammered out one of the men, on whom the giant had fixed his eye.

"You lie, traitor! Your ball struck my armor, and had I not worn a shirt of mail, it would have pierced my heart."

The man turned deadly pale, trembling from head to foot.

"My enemies have paid you to murder me?" The savage tried to speak, but words died upon his lips.

"Hang him instantly—he is a traitor!"

The rest of the gang immediately seized the culprit and carried him to the nearest tree, from whence his shrieks soon testified that his sentence was being put in execution.

The Decurio remained alone with the young man; and hastily lifting him, still senseless, from the ground, he mounted his horse, and placing him before him ere the savage horde had returned, he had galloped some distance along the road from whence the youth had come, covering him with his mantle as he passed the bridge, to conceal him from several of the gang who stood there, and exclaiming, " Follow me to the Tapanfalva."

As soon as they were out of sight, he suddenly turned to the left, down a steep, hilly path, and struck into the depth of the forest.

The morning sun had just shot its first beams across the hills, tinting with golden hue the reddening autumn leaves, when the young hussar began to move in his fevered dreams, and murmured the name " Jolanka."

In a few moments he opened his eyes. He was lying in a small chamber, through the only window of which the sunbeams shone upon his face.

The bed on which he lay was made of lime-boughs, simply woven together, and covered with wolves' skins. A gigantic form was leaning against the foot of the bed with his arms folded, and as the young man awoke, he turned round. It was the Decurio.

" Where am I? " asked the young man, vaguely endeavoring to recall the events of the past night.

" In my house," replied Decurio.

" And who are you? "

" I am Numa, Decurio of the Roumin * Legion, your foe in battle, but now your host and protector."

" And why did you save me from your men? " asked the young man, after a short silence.

" Because the strife was unequal—a hundred against one."

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* The Wallachians were, in the days of Trajan, subdued by the Romans, with whom they became intermixed, and are also called Roumi.

"But had it not been for you, I could have freed myself from them."

"Without me you had been lost. Ten paces from where I stopped your horse, you would inevitably have been dashed to pieces by huge stones which they were preparing to throw down upon you from the rock."

"And you did not desire my death?"

"No, because it would have reflected dishonor on the Roumin name."

"You are a chivalrous man, Decurio!"

"I am what you are; I know your character, and the same feeling inspires us both. You love your nation, as I do mine. Your nation is great and cultivated; mine is despised and neglected, and my love is more bitterly devoted. Your love for your country makes you happy; mine deprives me of peace. You have taken up arms to defend your country without knowing your own strength, or the number of the foe; I have done the same. Either of us may lose, or we may both be blotted out; but though the arms may be buried in the earth, rust will not eat them."

"I do not understand your grievances."

"You do not understand? Know, then, that although fourteen centuries have passed since the Roman eagle overthrew Diurbanus, there are still those among us—the now barbarous people—who can trace their descent from generation to generation, up to the times of its past glory. We have still our traditions, if we have nothing more; and can point out what forest stands in the place of the ancient Sarmisægethusa, and what town is built where one Decebalus overthrew the far-famed troops of the Consulate. And alas for that town! if the graves over which its houses are built should once more open, and turn the populous streets into a field of battle! What is become of the nation, the heir of so much glory?—the proud Dacians, the descendants of the far-famed legions? I do not reproach any nation for having brought us to what we now are; but let none reproach me if I desire to restore my people to what they once were."

"And do you believe that this is the time?"

"We have no prophets to point out the hour, but it seems yours do not see more clearly. We shall attempt it now, and if we fail our grandchildren will attempt it again. We have nothing to lose but a few lives; you risk much that is worth losing, and yet you assemble beneath the banner of war. Then war. Then what would you do if you were like us?—a people who possess nothing in this world among whom there is not one able or one instructed head; for although every third man bears the name of Papa, it is not every hundredth who can read! A people excluded from every employment; who live a miserable life in the severest manual labor; who have not one noble city in their country, the home of three-fourths of their people. Why should we seek to know the signs of the times in which we are to die, or be regenerated! We have nothing but our wretchedness, and if we are conquered we lose nothing. Oh! you did wrong for your own peace to leave a nation to such utter neglect!"

"We do not take up arms for our nation alone, but for freedom in general."

"You do wrong. It is all the same to us who our sovereign may be; only let him be just towards us, and raise up our fallen people; but you will destroy your nation—its power, its influence, and privileges—merely that you may live in a country without a head."

A loud uproar interrupted the conversation. A disorderly troop of Wallachians approached the Decurio's house, triumphantly bearing the hussar's csako on a pole before them.

"Had I left you there last night, they would now have exhibited your head instead of your csako."

The crowd halted before the Decurio's window, greeting him with loud vociferations.

The Decurio spoke a few words in the Wallachian language, on which they replied more vehemently than before, at the same time thrusting forward the kalpag on the pole.

The Decurio turned hastily round. "Was your name written on your kalpag?" he asked the young man, in evident embarrassment.

"It was."

"Unhappy youth! The people, furious at not having found you, are determined to attack your father's house."

"And you will permit them?" asked the youth, starting from bed.

"I dare not contradict them, unless I would lose their confidence. I can prevent nothing."

"Give me up—let them wreak their bloody vengeance on my head!"

"I should only betray myself for having concealed you; and it would not save your father's house."

"And if they murder the innocent and unprotected, on whom will the ignominy of their blood fall?"

"On me; but I will give you the means of preventing this disgrace. Do you accept it?"

"Speak!"

"I will give you a disguise; hasten to Kolozsvar and assemble your comrades,—then return and protect your house. I will wait you there, and man to man, in open honorable combat, the strife will no longer be ignominious."

"Thanks, thanks!" murmured the youth, pressing the Decurio's hand.

"There is not a moment to lose; here is a peasant's mantle—if you should be interrogated, you have only to show this paszura,* and mention my name. Your not knowing the language is of no consequence; my men are accustomed to see Hungarian gentlemen visit me in disguise, and having only seen you by night, they will not recognize you."

Imre hastily took the dress, while Decurio spoke to the people, made arrangements for the execution of their plans, and pointed out the way to the castle, promising to follow them immediately.

*** Everything on which a double-headed eagle—the emblem of the Austrian Government—was painted, engraved or sculptured, the Wallachians called paszura.**

"Accept my horse as a remembrance," said the young man, turning to the Decurio.

"I accept it, as it would only raise suspicion were you to mount it; but you may recover it again in the field. Haste, and lose no time! If you delay you will bring mourning on your own head and disgrace on mine!"

In a few minutes the young man, disguised as a Wallachian peasant, was hastening on foot across the hills of Kolozsvar.

It was past midnight.

The inhabitants of the Bardy castle had all retired to rest.

The iron gate was locked and the windows barred, when suddenly the sound of demoniac cries roused the slumberers from their dreams.

"What is that noise?" cried Jozsef Bardy, springing from his bed, and rushing to the window.

"The Olahok!" * cried a hussar, who had rushed to his master's apartments on hearing the sounds.

"The Olah! the Olah!" was echoed through the corridors by the terrified servants.

By the light of a few torches, a hideous crowd was seen before the windows, armed with scythes and axes, which they were brandishing with fearful menaces.

"Lock all the doors!" cried Jozsef Bardy, with calm presence of mind. "Barricade the great entrance, and take the ladies and children to the back rooms. You must not lose your heads, but all assemble together in the turret-chamber, from whence the whole building may be protected. And taking down two good rifles from over his bed, he hastened to his elder brother Tamas's apartments, and overlooked the court.

"Have you heard the noise?" asked his brother as he entered.

"I knew it would come," he replied, and coolly continued to pace the room.

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* **Olah, Wallachian—ok, plural.**

"And are you not preparing for defense?"

"To what purpose?—they will kill us all. I am quite prepared for what must inevitably happen."

"But it will not happen if we defend ourselves courageously. We are eight men—the walls of the castle are strong—the besiegers have no guns, and no place to protect them; we may hold out for days until assistance comes from Kolozsvar."

"We shall lose," replied Tamas coldly, and without the slightest change of countenance.

"Then I shall defend the castle myself. I have a wife and children, our old grandmother and our sisters are here, and I shall protect them, if I remain alone."

At that instant Barnabas and old Simon entered with the widowed sister.

Barnabas had a huge twenty-pound iron club in his hand; grinding his teeth, and with eyes darting fire, he seemed capable of meeting single-handed the whole troop.

He was followed by the widow, with two loaded pistols in her hand, and old Simon, who entreated them not to use violence or exasperate the enemy.

"Conduct yourselves bravely!" replied the widow dryly; "let us not die in vain."

"Come with me—we shall send them all to hell!" cried Barnabas, swinging his club in his herculean arm as if it had been a reed.

"Let us not be too hasty," interrupted Jozsef; we will stand here in the tower, from whence we can shoot every one that approaches, and if they break in, we can meet them on the stairs."

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Simon, "what are you going to do? If you kill one of them they will massacre us all. Speak to them peaceably—promise them wine—take them to the cellar—give them money—try to pacify them! Nephew Tamas, you will speak to them?" continued the old man, turning to Tamas, who still paced up and down, without the slightest visible emotion.

"Pacification and resistance are equally vain," he replied coldly; "we are inevitably lost!"

"We have no time for delay," said Jozsef impatiently; "take the arms from the wall, Barnabas, give one to each servant—let them stand at the back windows of the house, we two are enough here. Sister, stand between the windows, that the stones may not hit you; and when you load, do not strike the balls too far in, that our aim may be the more secure!"

"No! no!—I cannot let you fire," exclaimed the old man, endeavoring to drag Jozsef from the window. "You must not fire yet—only remain quiet."

"Go to the hurricane, old man! would you have us use holy water against a shower of stones?"

At that instant several large stones were dashed through the windows, breaking the furniture against which they fell.

"Only wait," said Simon, "until I speak with them. I am sure I shall pacify them. I can speak their language and I know them all—just let me go to them."

"A vain idea! If you sue for mercy they will certainly kill you, but if you show courage, you may bring them to their senses. You had better stay and take a gun."

But the old man was already out of hearing, and hurrying downstairs, he went out of a back door into the court, which the Wallachians had not yet taken possession of.

They were endeavoring to break down one of the stone pillars of the iron gate with their axes and hammers, and had already succeeded in making an aperture, through which one of the gang now climbed.

Old Simon recognized him. "Lupey, my son, what do you want here?" said the old man. "Have we ever offended you? Do you forget all that I have done for you?—how I cured your wife when she was so ill, and got you off from the military; and how, when your ox died, I gave you two fine bullocks to replace it? Do you not know me, my son Lupey?"

"I am not your son Lupey now; I am a 'malcontent!'"

cried the Wallachian, aiming a blow with a heavy hammer at the old man's head.

Uttering a deep groan, Simon fell lifeless to the ground.

The rest of the party saw the scene from the tower.

Barnabas rushed from the room like a maddened tiger, while Jozsef, retiring cautiously behind the embrasure of the window, aimed his gun as they were placing his uncle's head upon a spike, and shot the first who raised it. Another seized it, and the next instant he, too, fell to the earth; another and another, as many as attempted to raise the head, till, finally, none dared approach.

The widow loaded the guns while Tamas sat quietly in an armchair.

Meanwhile Barnabas had hurried to the attic, where several large fragments of iron had been stowed away, and dragging them to a window which overlooked the entrance, he waited until the gang had assembled round the door, and were trying to break in; when lifting an enormous piece with gigantic strength, he dropped it on the heads of the besiegers.

Fearful cries arose and the gang, who were at the door, fled right and left, leaving four or five of their number crushed beneath the ponderous mass.

The next moment they returned with redoubled fury, dashing stones against the windows and the roof, while the door resounded with the blows of their clubs.

Notwithstanding the stones which were flying round him, Barnabas stood at the window dashing heavy iron masses, and killing two or three men every time.

His brother meanwhile continued firing from the tower, and not a ball was aimed in vain. The besiegers had lost a great number, and began to fall back, after fruitless efforts to break in the door, when a footman entered breathless to inform Barnabas that the Wallachians were beginning to scale the opposite side of the castle with ladders, and that the servants were unable to resist them.

Barnabas rushed to the spot.

Two servants lay mortally wounded in one of the back rooms, through the windows of which the Wallachians were already beginning to enter, while another ladder had been placed against the opposite window, which they were beginning to scale as Barnabas entered.

" Here, wretches ! " he roared furiously, and, seizing the ladder with both hands, shook it so violently that the men were precipitated from it, and then lifting it with supernatural strength, he dashed it against the opposite one, which broke with the force of the weight thrown against it, the upper part falling backwards with the men upon it, while one of the party remained hanging from the window-sill, and, after immense exertions to gain a footing, he too fell to the earth.

Barnabas rushed into the next room grinding his teeth, his lips foaming, and his face of a livid hue ; so appalling was his appearance, that one of the gang, who had been the first to enter by the window, turned pale with terror, and dropped his axe.

Taking advantage of this, Barnabas darted on his enemy, and dragging him with irresistible force to the window, he dashed him from it.

" On here ! as many as you are ! " he shouted furiously, the blood gushing from his mouth from the blow of a stone. " On ! all who wish a fearful death ! "

At that instant, a shriek of terror rose within the house.

The Wallachians had discovered the little back door which Simon had left open, and, stealing through it, were already inside the house, when the shrieks of a servant girl gave the besieged notice of their danger.

Barnabas, seizing his club, hurried in the direction of the sounds ; he met his brother on the stairs, who had likewise heard the cry, and hastened thither with his gun in his hand, accompanied by the widow.

" Go, sister ! " said Jozsef, " take my wife and children to the attics ; we will try to guard the staircase step by step. Kiss them all for me. If we die, the villains will put us all in one grave—we shall meet again ! "

The widow retired.

The two brothers silently pressed hands, and then, standing on the steps, awaited their enemies. They did not wait long.

The bloodhounds with shouts of vengeance rushed on the narrow stone stairs.

"Hah! thus near I love to have you, dogs of hell!" cried Barnabas, raising his iron club with both hands, and dealing such blows right and left, that none whom it reached rose again. The stairs were covered with the dead and wounded, while their death cries, and the sound of the heavy club, echoed fearfully through the vaulted building.

The foremost of the gang retreated as precipitately as they had advanced, but were continually pressed forward again by the members from behind, while Barnabas drove them back unweariedly, cutting an opening through them with the blows of his club.

He had already beaten them back nearly to the bottom of the stairs, when one of the gang, who had concealed himself in a niche, pierced him through the back with a spike.

Dashing his club amongst the retreating crowd, he turned with a cry of rage, and seizing his murderer by the shoulders, dragged him down with him to the ground.

The first four who rushed to help the murderer were shot dead by Jozsef Bardy, who, when he had fired off both his muskets, still defended his prostrated brother with the butt-end of one, until he was overpowered and disarmed; after which a party of them carried him out to the iron cross, and crucified him on it amidst the most shocking tortures.

On trying to separate the other brother from his murderer, they found them both dead. With his last strength Barnabas had choked his enemy, whom he still held firmly in his deadly grip, and they were obliged to cut off his hand in order to disengage the Wallachian's body.

Tamas, the eldest brother, now alone survived. Seated in his armchair he calmly awaited his enemies, with a large silver chandelier burning on the table before him.

As the noise approached his chamber, he drew from its jeweled sheath his broad curved sword, and, placing it on the table before him, proceeded coolly to examine the ancient blade, which was inscribed with unknown characters.

At last the steps were at the door; the handle was turned —it had not even been locked.

The magnate rose, and, taking his sword from the table, he stood silently and calmly before the enemies, who rushed upon him with fearful oaths, brandishing their weapons still reeking with the blood of his brothers.

The nobleman stood motionless as a statue until they came within two paces of him, when suddenly the bright black steel gleamed above his head, and the foremost man fell at his feet with his skull split to the chin. The next received a deep gash in the shoulder of his outstretched arm, but not a word escaped the magnate's lips, his countenance retained its cold and stern expression as he looked at his enemies in calm disdain, as if to say, " Even in combat a nobleman is worth ten boors."

Warding off with the skill of a professed swordsman every blow aimed at him, he coolly measured his own thrusts, inflicting severe wounds on his enemies' faces and heads; but the more he evaded them the more furious they became. At last he received a severe wound in the leg from a scythe, and feel on one knee; but without evincing the slightest pain, he still continued fighting with the savage mob, until, after a long and obstinate struggle, he fell without a murmur, or even a death-groan.

The enraged gang cut his body to pieces, and in a few minutes they had hoisted his head on his own sword. Even then the features retained their haughty, contemptuous expression.

He was the last man of the family with whom they had to combat, but more than a hundred of their own band lay stretched in the court and before the windows, covering the stairs and rooms with heaps of bodies, and when the shouts of triumph ceased for an instant, the groans of the wounded and the dying were heard from every side.

None now remained but women and children. When the Wallachians broke into the castle, the widow had taken them all to the attics, leaving the door open, that her brothers might find refuge in case they were forced to retreat; and here the weaker members of the family awaited the issue of the combat which was to bring them life or death, listening breathlessly to the uproar, and endeavoring, from its confused sounds, to determine good or evil.

At last the voices died away, and the hideous cries of the besiegers ceased. The trembling women believed that the Wallachians had been driven out, and, breathing more freely, each awaited with impatience the approach of brother—husband—sons.

At last a heavy step was heard on the stairs leading to the garret.

"This is Barnabas's step!" cried the widow, joyfully, and still holding the pistols in her hand, she ran to the door of the garret.

Instead of her expected brother, a savage form, drunken with blood, strode towards her, his countenance burning with rage and triumph.

The widow started back, uttering a shriek of terror, and then with that unaccountable courage of desperation, she aimed one of the pistols at the Wallachian's breast, who instantly fell backwards on one of his comrades, who followed close behind. The other pistol she discharged into her own bosom.

And now we must draw a veil over the scene that followed. What happened there must not be witnessed by human eyes.

Suffice it to say, they murdered every one, women and children, with the most refined and brutal cruelty, and then threw their dead bodies out of the window from which Barnabas had dashed down the iron fragments on the besiegers' heads.

They left the old grandmother to the last, that she might witness the extermination of her whole family. Happily for her, her eyes had ceased to distinguish the light of sun, and ere long the light of an eternal glory had risen upon them.

The Wallachians then dug a common grave for the bodies, and threw them all in together. The little one, whom his parents loved so well, they cast in alive, his nurse having escaped from the attics and carried him downstairs, where they had been overtaken by the savages.

"There are only eleven here!" cried one of the gang, who had counted the bodies, "one of them must be still alive somewhere—there ought to be twelve!" And then they once more rushed through the empty rooms, overturning all the furniture, and cutting up and breaking everything they met with. They searched the garrets and every corner of the cellars, but without success.

At last a yell of triumph was heard. One of them had discovered a door which, being painted of the same color as the walls, had hitherto escaped their observation. It concealed a small apartment in the turret. With a few blows of their axes it was broken open, and they rushed in.

"Ah! a rare booty!" cried the foremost of the ruffians, while, with bloodthirsty curiosity, the others pressed round to see the new victim.

There lay the little orphan with the golden hair; her eyes were closed and a death-like hue had overspread her beautiful features.

Her aunt, with an instinctive foreboding, had concealed her here when she took the others to the attic.

The orphan grasped a sharp knife in her hand, with which she had attempted to kill herself; and when her fainting hands refused the fearful service, she had swooned in despair.

"Ah!" cried the Wallachians, in savage admiration, their bloodthirsty countenances assuming a still more hellish expression.

"This is a common booty!" cried several voices together.

"A beautiful girl! A noble lady! ha, ha! She will just suit the tattered Wallachians!" And with their foul and bloody hands, they seized the young girl by her fair slight arms.

"Ha! what is going on here?" thundered a voice from behind.

The Wallachians looked round.

A figure stood among them fully a head taller than all the rest. He wore a brass helmet, in which a deep cleft was visible, and held in his left hand a Roman sword. His features bore the ancient Roman character.

"The Decurio!" they murmured, making way for him.

"What is going on here?" he repeated; and seizing the fainting girl in the arms of a Wallachian, he ordered him to lay her down.

"She is one of our enemies," replied the savage insolently.

"Silence, knave! Does one of the Roumin nation seek enemies in women? Lay her down instantly."

"Not so, leader," interrupted Lupey; "our laws entitle us to a division of the spoil. This girl is our booty; she belongs to us after the victory."

"I know our laws better than you do, churl! Due division of spoil is just and fair; but we cast lots for what cannot be divided."

"True, leader: a horse or an ox cannot be divided, and for them we cast lots, but in this case——"

"I have said it cannot, and I should like to know who dares to say it can!"

Lupey knew the Decurio too well to proffer another syllable, and the rest turned silently from the girl; one voice alone was heard to exclaim, "It can!"

"Who dares to say that?" cried the Decurio; "let him come forward!"

A young Wallachian, with long plaited hair, confronted the Decurio. He was evidently intoxicated, and replied, striking his breast with his fist: "I said so."

Scarcely had the words escaped his lips, than the Decurio, raising his left hand, severed the contradictor's head at one stroke from his body; and as it fell back, the lifeless trunk dropped on its knees before the Decurio, with its arms around him, as if in supplication.

"Dare anyone still say it can?" asked Numa, with merciless rigor.

The Wallachians turned silently away.

"Put the horses immediately to the carriage; the girl must be placed in it, and brought to Topanfalvo. Whoever has the good fortune of winning her, has a right to receive her as I confide her to you; but if anyone of you should dare to offend her in the slightest degree, even by a look or a smile, remember this and take example from it," continued the Decurio, pointing with his sword to the headless body of the young man. "And now you may go—destroy and pillage."

At these words the band scattered right and left, the Decurio with the fainting girl, whom he lifted into the carriage and confided to some faithful retainers of the family, pointing out the road across the hills.

In half an hour the castle was in flames and the Wallachians, descending into the cellars, had knocked out the bottoms of the casks, and bathed in the sea of flowing wine and brandy, singing wild songs, while the fire burst from every window enveloping the blackened walls; after which the revelers departed, leaving their dead, and those who were too helplessly intoxicated to follow them.

Meanwhile they brought the young girl to the Decurio's house, and as each man considered that he had an equal right to the prize, they kept a vigilant eye upon her, and none dared offend her so much as by a look.

When the Decurio arrived, they all crowded into the house with him, filling the rooms, as well as the entrance and porch.

Having laid out the spoil before them on the ground, the leader proceeded to divide it into equal shares, retaining for himself a portion of ten men, after which most of the band dispersed to their homes; but a good many remained, greedily eyeing their still unappropriated victim, who lay pale and motionless as the dead on the couch of lime-boughs where they had laid her.

"You are waiting, I suppose, to cast lots for the girl?" said Numa dryly.

"Certainly," replied Lupey, with an insolent leer; "and his she will be who casts highest. If two, or ten, or twenty of us should cast the same, we have an equal right to her."

"I tell you only one can have her," interrupted Numa sternly.

"Then those who win must cast again among each other."

"Casting the die will not do; we may throw all day long, and two may remain at the end."

"Well, let us play cards for her."

"I cannot allow that, the more cunning will deceive the simpler."

"Well, write our names upon bricks, and throw them all into a barrel; and whichever name you draw will take away the girl."

"I can say what name I please, for none of you can read."

The Wallachian shock his head impatiently.

"Well, propose something yourself, Decurio."

"I will. Let us try which of us can give the best proof of courage and daring; and whoever can do that, shall have the girl, for he best deserves her."

"Well said!" cried the men unanimously. "Let us each relate what we have done, and then you can judge which among us is the boldest."

"I killed the first Bardy in the court in sight of his family."

"I broke in the door, when that terrible man was dashing down the iron on our heads."

"But it was I who pierced his heart."

"I mounted the stairs first."

"I fought nearly half an hour with the noble in the cloth of gold."

And thus they continued. Each man, according to his own account, was the first and the bravest—each had performed miracles of valor.

"You have all behaved with great daring, but it is impossible now to prove what has happened. The proof must be given here, by all of us together, before my eyes, indisputably."

"Well, tell us how," said Lupey impatiently, always fearing that the Decurio was going to deceive them.

"Look here," said Numa, drawing a small cask from beneath the bed—and in doing so he observed that the young girl half opened her eyes, as she glanced at him, and then closed them. She was awake, and had heard all.

As he stooped down, Numa whispered gently in her ear: "Fear nothing," and then drew the cask into the middle of the room.

The Wallachians stared with impatient curiosity as he knocked out the bottom of the cask with a hatchet.

"This cask contains gunpowder," continued Decurio. "We will light a match and place it in the middle of the cask, and whoever remains longest in the room is undoubtedly the most courageous; for there is enough here to blow up not only this house, but the whole of the neighboring village."

At this proposition several of the men began to murmur.

"If any are afraid they are not obliged to remain," said the Decurio dryly.

"I agree," said Lupey doggedly. "I will remain here; and perhaps, after all, it is poppy-seeds you have got there —it looks very much like them."

The Decurio stooped down, and taking a small quantity between his fingers, threw it into the Wallachian's pipe, which immediately exploded, causing him to stagger backwards, and the next instant he stood with a blackened visage, sans beard and moustache, amidst the jeers and laughter of his comrades.

This only exasperated him the more.

"I will stay for all that!" he exclaimed; and lifting up the pipe which he had dropped, he walked over and lit it at the burning match which the Decurio was placing in the cask.

Upon this, two-thirds of the men left the room.

The rest assembled around the cask with much noise and bravado, swearing by heaven and earth that they would stay until the match burned out; but the more they swore, the more they looked at the burning match, the flame of which was slowly approaching the gunpowder.

For some minutes their courage remained unshaken, but after that they ceased to boast, and began to look at each other in silent consternation, while their faces grew paler every instant. At last one or two rose and stood aloof; the others followed their example, and some grinding their teeth with rage, others chattering with terror, they all began to leave the room.

Only two remained beside the cask; Numa, who stood with his arms folded leaning against the foot of the bed; and Lupey, who was sitting on the iron of the cask with his back turned to the danger, and smoking furiously

As soon as they were alone, the latter glanced behind him and saw the flame was within an inch of the powder.

"I'll tell you what, Decurio," he said, springing up, "we are only two left, don't let us make food of each other; let us come to an understanding on this matter."

"If you are tired of waiting, I can press the match lower."

"This is no jest, Numa; you are risking your own life. How can you wish to send us both to hell for the sake of a pale girl? But I'll tell you what—I'll give her up to you if you will only promise that she shall be mine when you are tired of her."

"Remain here and win her—if you dare."

"To what purpose?" said the Wallachian, in a whining voice, and in his impatience he began to tear his clothes and stamp with his feet, like a petted child.

"What I have said stands good," said the Decurio; "whoever remains longest has the sole right to the lady."

"Well, I will stay, of course; but what do I gain by it? I know you will stay, too, and then the devil will have us both; and I speak not only for myself when I say I do not wish that."

"If you do not wish it, you had better be gone."

"Well, I don't care—if you will give me a golden mark."

"Not the half; stay if you like it."

"Decurio, this is madness! The flame will reach the powder immediately."

"I see it."

"Well, say a dollar."

"Not a whit."

"May the seventy-seven limited thunder-bolt strike you on St. Michael's Day!" roared the Wallachian fiercely, as he rushed to the door; but after he had gone out, he once more thrust his head in and cried: "Will you give even a florin? I am not gone yet."

"Nor have I removed the match; you may come back." The Wallachian slammed the door, and ran for his life, till exhausted and breathless he sank under a tree, where he lay with his tunic over his head, and his ears covered with his hands, only now and then raising his head nervously, to listen for the awful explosion which was to blow up the world.

Meanwhile Numa coolly removed the match, which was entirely burnt down; and throwing it into the grate, he stepped over to the bed and whispered into the young girl's ear: "You are free!"

Trembling, she raised herself in the bed and taking the Decurio's large, sinewy hands within her own, she murmured: "Be merciful! O hear my prayer, and kill me!"

The Decurio stroked the fair hair of the lovely suppliant.

"Poor child!" he replied gently; "you have nothing to fear; nobody will hurt you now."

"You have saved me from these fearful people—now save me from yourself!"

"You have nothing to fear from me," replied the Dacian, proudly; "I fight for liberty alone, and you may rest as securely within my threshold as on the steps of the altar. When I am absent you need have no anxiety, for these walls are impregnable, and if anyone should dare offend you by the slightest look, that moment shall be the last of his mortal career. And when I am at home you have nothing to fear, for woman's image never dwelt within my heart. Accept my poor couch, and may your rest be sweet!—Imre Bardy slept on it last night."

"Imre!" exclaimed the starting girl. "You have seen him, then?—oh! where is he!"

The Decurio hesitated. "He should not have delayed so long," he murmured, pressing his hand against his brow; "all would have been otherwise."

"Oh! let me go to him; if you know where he is."

"I do not know, but I am certain he will come here if he is alive—indeed he must come."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because he will seek you."

"Did he then speak—before you?"

"As he lay wounded on that couch, he pronounced your name in his dreams. Are you not that Jolanka Bardy whom they call 'The Angel'? I knew you by your golden locks."

The young girl cast down her eyes. "Then you think he will come?" she said in a low voice. "And my relations?"

"He will come as soon as possible; and now you must take some food and rest. Do not think about your relations now; they are all in a safe place—nobody can hurt them more."

The Decurio brought some refreshment, laid a small prayer-book on the pillow, and left the orphan by herself.

The poor girl opened the prayer-book, and her tears fell like rain-drops on the blessed page; but, overcome by the fatigue and terror she had undergone, her head ere long sank gently back, and she slept calmly and sweetly the sleep of exhausted innocence.

As evening closed, the Decurio returned, and softly approaching the bed, looked long and earnestly at the fair sleeper's face, until two large tears stood unconsciously in his eyes.

The Roumin hastily brushed away the unwonted moisture, and as if afraid of the feeling which had stolen into his breast, he hastened from the room, and laid himself upon his woolen rug before the open door.

The deserted castle still burned on, shedding a ghastly light on the surrounding landscape, while the deepest silence reigned around, only broken now and then by an expiring groan, or the hoarse song of a drunken reveler.

Day was beginning to dawn as a troop of horsemen galloped furiously towards the castle from the direction of Kolozsvar.

They were Imre and his comrades.

Silently and anxiously they pursued their course, their eyes fixed upon one point, as they seemed to fly rather than gallop along the road. "We are too late!" exclaimed one of the party at last, pointing to a dim red smoke along the horizon. "Your castle is burning!"

Without returning an answer, Imre spurred his panting horse to a swifter pace. A turn in the road suddenly brought the castle to their view, its blackened walls still burning, while red smoke rose high against the side of the hill.

The young man uttered a fierce cry of despair, and galloped madly down the declivity. In less than a quarter of an hour he stood before the ruined walls.

"Where is my father? where are my family? where is my bride?" he shrieked in frantic despair, brandishing his sword over the head of a half-drunken Wallachian, who was leaning against the ruined portico.

The latter fell to his knees, imploring mercy, and declaring that it was not he who killed them.

"Then they are dead!" exclaimed the unhappy youth, as, half-choked by his sobs, he fell forward on his horse's neck.

Meanwhile his companions had ridden up, and immediately sounded the Wallachian, whom, but for Imre's interference, they would have cut down.

"Lead us to where you have buried them. Are they all dead?" he continued; "have you not left one alive? Accursed be the sun that rises after such a night!"

The Wallachian pointed to a large heap of fresh-raised mould. "They are all there!" he said.

Imre fell from his horse without another word, as if struck down.

His companions removed him to a little distance, where the grass was least red.

They then began to dig twelve graves with their swords.

Imre watched them in silence. He seemed unconscious what they were about.

When they had finished the graves they proceeded to open the large pit, but the sight was too horrible, and they carried Imre away by force. He could not have looked on what was there and still retain his senses.

In a short time, one of his comrades approached and told him that there were only eleven bodies in the grave.

"Then one of them must be alive!" cried Imre, a slight gleam of hope passing over his pale features; "which is it?—speak! Is there not a young girl with golden locks among them?"

"I know not," stammered his comrade, in great embarrassment.

"You do not know?—go and look again." His friend hesitated.

"Let me go—I must know," said Imre impatiently, as the young man endeavored to detain him.

"O stay, Imre, you cannot look on them; they are all headless!"

"My God!" exclaimed the young man, covering his face with both hands, and, bursting into tears he threw himself down with his face upon the earth.

His comrades questioned the Wallachian closely as to what he knew about the young girl. First he returned no answer, pretending to be drunk and not to understand;

but on their promising to spare his life, on the sole condition that he would speak the truth, he confessed that she had been carried away to the mountains, where the band were to cast lots for her.

"I must go!" said Imre, starting as if in a trance.

"Whither?" inquired his comrades.

"To seek her! Take off your dress," he continued, turning to the Wallachian, "you may have mine in exchange," and, hastily putting on the tunic, he concealed his pistols in the girdle beneath it.

"We will follow you," said his comrades, taking up their arms; "we will seek her from village to village."

"No, no, I must go alone! I shall find her more easily alone. If I do not return, avenge this for me," he said, pointing to the moat; then, turning to the Wallachian, he added sternly: "I have found beneath your girdle a gold medallion, which my grandmother wore suspended from her neck, and by which I know you to be one of her murderers, and, had I not promised to spare your life, you should now receive the punishment that you deserve. Keep him here," he said to his comrades, "until I have crossed the hills, and then let him go."

And taking leave of his friends, he cast one glance at the eleven heaps, and at the burning castle of his ancestors, and hastened toward the mountains.

The hoary autumn nights had dyed the leaves of the forest. The whole country looked as if it had been washed in blood.

Deep amidst the wildest forest the path suddenly descends into a narrow valley, surrounded by steep rocks at the foot of which lies a little village half concealed among the trees.

It seemed as if the settlers there had only cleared sufficient ground to build their dwellings, leaving all the rest a dense forest. Apart from the rest, on the top of a rock, stood a cottage, which, unlike others, was constructed entirely of large blocks of stone, and only approachable by a small path cut in the rock.

A young man ascended this path. He was attired in a peasant's garb and although he evidently had traveled far, his step was light and fleet. When he had ascended about halfway, he was suddenly stopped by an armed Wallachian, who had been kneeling before a shrine in the rock, and seeing the stranger, rose and stood in his path.

The latter pronounced the Decurio's name, and produced his pazsura.

The Wallachian examined it on every side, and then stepped back to let the stranger pass, after which he once more laid down his scythe and cap, and knelt before the shrine.

The stranger knocked at the Decurio's door, which was locked, and an armed Wallachian appeared from behind the rocks, and informed him that the Decurio was not at home, only his wife.

"His wife?" exclaimed the stranger in surprise.

"Yes, that pale girl who fell to him by lot."

"And she is his wife."

"He told us so himself, and swore that if any of us dared so much as lift his eye upon her, he would send him to St. Nicholas in paradise."

"Can I not see her?"

"I would not advise you; for if the Decurio hears of it, he will make halves of you; but you may go around to the window if you like—only let me get out of the way first, that the Decurio may not find me here."

The stranger hastened to the window, and looking in, he saw the young girl seated on an armchair made of rough birch boughs, with a little prayer-book on her knee; her fair arm supporting her head, while a mass of golden ringlets half veiled her face, which was as pale as an alabaster statue; the extreme sadness of its expression rendering her beauty still more touching.

"Jolanka!" exclaimed the stranger passionately.

She started at the well-known voice, and, uttering a cry of joy, rushed to the window.

"Oh, Imre!" she murmured, "are you come at last!"

"Can I not enter? can I not speak with you?"

The young girl hastened to unbar the door, which was locked on the inside, and as Imre entered she threw herself into his arms, while he pressed her fondly to his heart.

The Wallachian, who had stolen to the window, stood aghast with terror and, soon as the Decurio arrived, he ran to meet him, and related, with vehement gesticulations, how the girl had thrown herself into the peasant's arms.

"And how did you know that?" asked Numa coldly.

"I saw them through the window."

"And dared you look through my window? Did I not forbid you? Down on your knees, and pray!"

The Wallachian fell on his knees, and clasped his hands.

"Rebel! you deserve your punishment of death for having disobeyed my commands; and if you ever dare to open your lips on the subject, depend upon it, you shall not escape!" And with these words he strode away, leaving the astonished informer on his knees, in which posture he remained for some time afterwards, not daring to raise his head until the Decurio's steps had died away.

As Numa entered the house, the lovers hastened to meet him. For an instant or two he stood at the threshold, regarding the young man with a look of silent reproach. "Why did you come so late?" he asked.

Imre held out his hand, but the Decurio did not accept it.

"The blood of your family is on my hand," he whispered. "You have let dishonor come on me, and mourning on yourself."

The young man's head sunk on his breast in silent anguish.

"Take his hand," said Jolanka, in her low, sweet accents; and then turning to Imre, "He saved your life—he saved us both, and he will rescue our family, too."

Imre looked at her in astonishment.

The Decurio seized his arms and drew him aside. "She does not know that they are dead," he whispered; "she was not with them, and knows nothing of their fate; and I have consoled her with the idea that they are all prisoners, she must never know the horrors of that fearful night."

"But sooner or later she will hear it."

"Never! you must leave the place and the kingdom. You must go to Turkey."

"My way lies towards Hungary."

"You must not think of it. Evil days await that country; your prophets do not see them, but I know, and see them clearly. Go to Turkey; I will give you letters by which you may pass in security through Wallachia and Moldavia; and here is a purse of gold—do not scruple to accept it, for it is your own, it belonged to *them*. Promise me, for her sake," he continued earnestly, pointing to Jolanka, "that you will not go to Hungary."

Imre hesitated. "I cannot promise what I am not sure I shall fulfill; but I shall remember your advice."

Numa took the hands of the two lovers, and, gazing long and earnestly on their faces, he said, in a voice of deep feeling, "You love one another?"

They pressed his hand in silence.

"You will be happy—you will forget your misfortunes. God bless and guide you on your way! Take these letters, and keep the direct road to Brasso,* by the Saxon-land.† You will find free passage everywhere, and never look behind until the last pinnacles of the snowy mountains are beyond your sight. Go! we will not take leave, not a word, let us forget each other!"

The Decurio watched the lovers until they were out of sight; and called to them, even when they could hear him no longer: "Do not go towards Hungary."

He then entered his house. The prayer-book lay open as the young girl had left it; the page was still damp with her tears. Numa's hand trembled, as he kissed the volume fervently and placed it in his bosom.

When night came on, the Roumin lay down on his wolfskin couch, where the golden-haired maiden, and her lover before her, had slept, but it seemed as if they had stolen his rest—he could not close his eyes there, so he rose and went out on the porch, where he spread his rug before the open door; but it was long ere he could sleep—there was an unwonted feeling at his heart, something like happiness, yet inexpressibly sad; and, buried in deep reverie, he lay with his eyes fixed on the dark blue starry vault above him till past midnight. Suddenly he thought he heard the report of some fire-arms at a great distance, and at the same moment two stars sank beneath the horizon. Numa thought of the travelers, and a voice seemed to whisper, "They are now happy!"

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* Brasso, or Kyonstadt, a town in the southeast of Transylvania, on the frontier of Wallachia.

† A district inhabited by a colony of Saxons.

The moon had risen high in the heavens, when the Decurio was roused from his sleep by heavy footsteps, and five or six Wallachians, among whom was Lupey, stood before him.

"We have brought two enemies' heads," said the latter, with a dark look at the Decurio; "pay us their worth!" and taking two heads from his pouch he laid them on Numa's mat.

The Wallachians watched their leader's countenance with sharp, suspicious glances.

Numa recognized the two heads by the light of the moon. They were those of Imre and Jolanka, but his features did not betray the slightest emotion.

"You will know them probably," continued Lupey. "The young magnate, who escaped us at the pass, came for the girl in your absence, and at the same time stole your money, and, what is more, we found your pazsura upon him also."

"Who killed them?" asked the Decurio, in his usual calm voice.

"None of us," replied the Wallachian; "as we rushed upon them, the young magnate drew two pistols from his girdle, and shot the girl through the head first, and himself afterwards."

"Were you all there?"

"And more of us besides."

"Go back and bring the rest. I will divide the money you have found on them among you. Make haste; and should one of you remain behind, his share will be divided among the rest."

The Wallachians hastened to seek their comrades with cries of joy.

The Decurio then locked the door, and, throwing himself upon the ground beside the two heads, he kissed them a hundred times, and sobbed like a child.

"I warned you not to go toward Hungary!" he said bitterly. "Why did you not hear me, unhappy children? why did you not take my word?" and he wept over his enemies' heads as if he had been their father.

He then rose, his eyes darting fire, and, shaking his terrible fist, he cried, in a voice hoarse with rage: "Czine mintye!" *

In a few hours, the Wallachians had assembled before the Decurio's house. They were about fifty or sixty, all wild, fearful-looking men.

Numa covered the two heads with a cloth, and laid them on the bed, after which he opened the door.

Lupey entered last.

"Lock the door," said Numa, when they were all in; "we must not be interrupted;" and, making them stand in a circle, he looked around at them all, one by one.

"Are you all here?" he asked at last.

"Not one is absent."

"Do you consider yourselves all equally deserving of sharing *the booty?*"

"All of us."

"It was you," he continued to Lupey, "who struck down the old man?"

"It was."

"And you who pierced the magnate with a spike?"

"You are right, leader."

"And you really killed all the women in the castle?" turning to a third.

"With my own hand."

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* **Czine mintye !—A Wallachian term signifying revenge.**

"And one and all of you can boast of having massacred, and plundered, and set on fire?"

"All! all!" they cried, striking their breasts.

"Do not lie before Heaven. See! your wives are listening at the window to what you say, and will betray you if you do not speak the truth."

"We speak the truth!"

"It is well!" said the leader, as he calmly approached the bed; and, seating himself on it, uncovered the two heads and placed them on his knee. "Where did you put their bodies?" he asked.

"We cut them in pieces and strewed them on the high-road."

There was a short silence. Numa's breathing became more and more oppressed, and his large chest heaved convulsively. "Have you prayed yet?" he asked in an altered voice.

"Not yet, leader. What should we pray for?" said Lupey.

"Fall down on your knees and pray, for this is the last morning which will dawn on any of you again."

"Are you in your senses, leader? What are you going to do?"

"I am going to purge the Roumin nation of a set of ruthless murderers and brigands. Miserable wretches; instead of glory, you have brought dishonor and disgrace upon our arms wherever you have appeared. While the brave fought on the field of battle, you slaughtered their wives and children; while they risked their lives before the cannon's mouth you attacked the house of the sleepers and robbed and massacred the helpless and the innocent. Fall down on your knees and pray for your souls, for the angel of death stands over you, to blot out your memory from among the Roumin people!"

The last words were pronounced in a fearful tone. Numa was no longer the cold unmoved statue he had hitherto appeared, he was like a fiery genius of wrath, whose very breath was destruction.

The Wallachians fell upon their knees in silent awe, while the women who had been standing outside, rushed shrieking down the rocks.

The Decurio drew a pistol from his breast, and approached the cask of gunpowder.

With a fearful howl, they rushed upon him; the shriek of despair was heard for an instant, then the terrible explosion which caused the rocks to tremble, while the flames rose with a momentary flash amidst clouds of dust and smoke, scaring the beasts of the forest, and scattering stones and beams, and hundreds of dismembered limbs, far through the valley, and over the houses of the terrified inhabitants!

When the smoke had dissipated, a heap of ruins stood in the place of Numa's dwelling.

The sun rose and smiled upon the earth, which was strewed with the last leaves of autumn, but where were those who had assembled at the spring-time of the year?

The evening breezes whispered mournfully through the ruined walls, and strewed the faded leaves upon eleven grassy mounds.

The pen trembles in my hand—my heart sickens at the recital of such misery.

Would that I could believe it an imagination—the ghostly horror of a fevered brain!

Would that I could bid my gentle readers check the falling tear or tell them: "Start not with horror; it is but romance—the creation of some fearful dream—let us awake, and see it no more!"

Etienne Bársony

The Dancing Bear

FIFE and drum were heard from the big market-place. People went running towards it. In a village the slightest unusual bustle makes a riot. Everybody is curious to know the cause of the alarm, and whether the wheels of the world are running out of their orbit. In the middle of the great dusty market-place some stunted locust trees were hanging their faint, dried foliage, and from far off one could already see that underneath these miserable trees a tall, handsome, young man and a huge, plump dark-brown, growling bear were hugging each other.

Joco, the bear-leader, was giving a performance. His voice rang like a bugle-horn, and, singing his melancholy songs, he from time to time interrupted himself and hurrahed, whereupon the bear began to spring and roar angrily. The two stamped their feet, holding close together, like two tipsy comrades. But the iron-weighted stick in the young man's hand made it evident that the gigantic beast was quite capable of causing trouble, and was only restrained from doing so because it had learnt from experience that the least outbreak never failed to bring down vengeance upon its back. The bear was a very powerful specimen from Bosnia, with thick brown fur and a head as broad as a bull's. When he lifted himself up on his hind legs he was half a head taller than Joco, his master.

The villagers stood round them with anxious delight, and animated the bear with shouts of "Jump, Ibrahim! Hop, Ibrahim!" but nobody ventured to go near. Joco was no stranger to these people. After every harvest he visited the rich villages of Bánát with his bear. They knew that he was a native of the frontier of Slavonia, and they were not particularly keen to know anything else about him. A man who leads such a vagrant life does not stay long in any one place, and has neither friends nor foes anywhere. They supposed that he spent part of the year in Bosnia, perhaps the winter, visiting, one after the other, the Servian monasteries. Now, in midsummer, when he was least to be expected, they suddenly hear his fife and drum.

Ibrahim, the big old bear, roused the whole village in less than a quarter of an hour with his far-reaching growls. The dogs crouched horror-struck, their hair standing on end, barking at him in fear and trembling.

When Joco stopped at some street corner, or in the market-place, and began to beat his rattling drum, the bear lifted himself with heavy groans on his hind legs, and then the great play began, the cruel amusement, the uncanny, fearful embracings which one could never be sure would not end fatally. For Joco is not satisfied to let Ibrahim jump and dance, but, whistling and singing, grasps the wild beast's skin, and squeezes his paws; and so the two dance together, the one roaring and groaning, the other singing with monotonous voice a melancholy song.

The company of soldiers stationed in the village was just returning from drill, and Captain Winter, Ritter von Wallishausen, turned in curiosity his horse's head towards the crowd, and made a sign to Lieutenant Vig to lead the men on. His fiery half-blood Graditz horse snuffed the disgusting odor of the wild beast, and would go no nearer.

The Captain called a hussar from the last line that passed him, and confided the stubborn horse to his charge. Then he bent his steps towards the swaying crowd. The villagers opened out a way for him, and soon the Captain stood close behind the bear-leader. But before he could fix his eyes on Ibrahim they were taken captive by something else.

A few steps away from Joco a young girl sat upon the ground, gently stroking a light-colored little bear. They were both so huddled up together that the villagers scarcely noticed them, and the Captain was therefore all the better able to observe the young woman, who appeared to be withdrawing herself as much as possible from public gaze. And really she seemed to be an admirable young creature. She was slight of build, perhaps not yet fully developed, with the early ripeness of the Eastern beauty expressed in face and figure—a black cherry, at sight of which the mouth of such a gourmand as the Ritter von Wallishausen would naturally water! Her fine face seemed meant only to be the setting of her two black eyes. She wore a shirt of coarse linen, a frock of many-colored material, and a belt around her waist. Her beautifully formed bosom, covered only by the shirt, rose and fell in goddesslike shamelessness. A string of glass beads hung round her neck, and two long earrings tapped her cheeks at every movement. She made no effort to hide her bare feet, but now and then put back her untidy but beautiful black hair from her forehead and eyes; for it was so thick that if she did not do so she could not see.

The girl felt that the Captain's fiery gaze was meant for her and not for the little bear. She became embarrassed, and instinctively turned her head away. Just at this moment Joco turned round with Ibrahim. The tall Servian peasant let the whistle fall from his hand, and the wild dance came to an end. Ibrahim understood that the performance was over, and, putting down his front paws on the ground, licked, as he panted, the strong iron bars of his muzzle.

The Captain and Joco looked at each other. The powerful young bear-leader was as pale as death. He trembled as if something terrible had befallen him. Captain Winter looked at him searchingly. Where, he asked himself, had he met this man?

The villagers did not understand what was going on, and began to shout, "Zorka! Now, Zorka, it is your turn with Mariska." The cries of the villagers brought Joco to himself, and with a motion worthy of a player he roused the little bear to its feet. Then he made signs to the girl. Being too excited to blow his whistle, he started singing and beating the drum; but his voice trembled so much that by and by he left off singing and let the girl go through her performance alone.

Then the Captain saw something that wrought him up to ecstasy. Zorka was singing a sad Bosnian song in her tender, crooning voice, and dancing with graceful steps round the little bear, who, to tell the truth, also danced more lightly than the heavy Ibrahim, and was very amusing when he lifted his paw to his head as Hungarians do when they are in high spirits and break forth in hurrahs.

Captain Winter, however, saw nothing but the fair maid, whose pearly white teeth shone out from between her red lips. He felt he would like to slip a silk ribbon round her waist, which swayed as lightly as a reed waving to and fro in the wind, and lead her off as if she were a beautiful colored butterfly.

Zorka grew tired of the sad, melancholy song, and began to dance wildly and passionately. Perhaps her natural feminine vanity was roused within her, and she wanted to show off at her best before the handsome soldier. Her eyes sparkled; a flush spread from time to time over her face; with her sweet voice she animated the little bear, crying, "Mariska, Mariska, jump!" But after a while she seemed to forget the growling little creature altogether, and went on dancing a kind of graceful fandango of her own invention. As she swayed, it seemed as if the motion and excitement caused every fiber of her body to flash out a sort of electric glow. By the time the girl flung herself, quite exhausted, in the dust at his feet, Captain Winter was absolutely beside himself. Such a morsel of heavenly daintiness did not often drop in his path now that he was fasting in this purgatory of a village. His stay there had been one long Lent, during which joys and pleasures had been rare indeed.

. . . .

It began to grow dark. At the other end of the market-place several officers were on their way to supper at the village inn where they always messed. The Captain turned to the man and woman in possession of the bears and ordered them in no friendly tone to go with him to the inn as his guests. Joco bowed humbly like a culprit, and gloomily led on his comrade Ibrahim. Zorka, on the contrary, looked gay as she walked along beside the light-colored bear.

The Captain looked again and again at the bear-leader walking in front of him. "Where have I seen this fellow before?" he kept asking himself. His uncertainty did not last long. His face brightened. "Oh, yes; I remember!" he inwardly exclaimed. Now he felt sure that this black cherry of Bosnia, this girl with the waist of a dragon-fly, was his.

The inn, once a gentleman's country-house, was built of stone. The bears were lodged in a little room which used to serve the former owner of the house as pantry, and were chained to the strong iron lattice of the window. In one corner of this little room the landlord ordered one of his servants to make a good bed of straw. "The Captain will pay for it," he said.

When everything was ready in the little room, the Captain called Joco and took him there. He knew that what he was going to do was not chivalrous; but he had already worked himself up to a blaze of excitement over the game he meant to play, and this fellow was too stupid to understand what a hazardous piece of play it was. When they were alone he stood erect before the bear-leader and looked fixedly into his eyes.

"You are Joco Hics," he said; "two years ago you deserted from my regiment."

The strong, tall, young peasant began to tremble so that his knees knocked together, but could not answer a single word. Fritz Winter, Ritter von Wallishausen, whispered into Joco's ear, his speech agitated and stuttering: "You have a woman with you," he said, "who surely is not your wife. Set her free. I will buy her from you for any price you ask. You can go away with your bears and pluck yourself another such flower where you found this one."

Joco stood motionless for a while as if turned into stone.

He did not tremble any longer: the crisis was over. He had only been frightened as long as he was uncertain whether or not he would be instantly hanged if he were found out.

"In all Bosnia," he answered gloomily, "there was only one such flower and that I stole."

Before a man who was willing to share his guilt, he dared acknowledge his crime. In truth, this man was no better than himself. He only wore finer clothes.

The Captain became impatient. "Are you going to give her up, or not?" he asked. "I do not want to harm you; but I could put you in prison and in chains, and what would become of your sweetheart then?"

Joco answered proudly: "She would cry her eyes out for me; otherwise she would not have run away from her rich father's house for my sake."

Ah! thought the Captain, if it were only that! By degrees I could win her to me.

But it was not advisable to make a fuss, whether for the sake of his position or because of his wife, who lived in town.

"Joco, I tell you what," said the Captain, suddenly becoming calm. "I am going away now for a short time. I shall be gone about an hour. By that time everybody will be in bed. The officers who sup with me, and the innkeeper and his servants, will all be sound asleep. I give you this time to think it over. When I come back you will either hold out your hand to be chained or to receive a pile of gold in it. In the meantime I shall lock you in there, because I know how very apt you are to disappear." He went out, and turned the key twice in the lock. Joco was left alone.

When the hour had expired Captain Winter noisily opened the door. His eyes sparkled from the strong wine he had taken during supper, as well as from the exquisite expectation which made his blood boil.

Joco stood smiling submissively before him. "I have thought it over, sir," he said. "I will speak with the little Zorka about it."

Ritter Winter now forgot that he was speaking with a deserter, whom it was his duty to arrest. He held out his hand joyfully to the Bosnian peasant, and said encouragingly: " Go speak with her; but make haste. Go instantly."

They crept together to the pantry where the girl slept near the chained bears. Joco opened the door without making a sound, and slipped in. It seemed to the Captain that he heard whispering inside. These few moments seemed an eternity to him. At last the bear-leader reappeared and, nodding to the Captain, said: " Sir, you are expected."

Captain Winter had undoubtedly taken too much wine. He staggered as he entered the pantry, the door of which the bear-leader shut and locked directly he had entered. He then listened with such an expression on his face as belongs only to a born bandit. Almost immediately a growling was heard, and directly afterwards some terrible swearing and a fall. The growling grew stronger and stronger. At last it ended in a wild roar. A desperate cry disturbed the stillness of the night: " Help! help! "

In the yard and round about it the dogs woke up, and with terrible yelping ran towards the pantry, where the roaring of the bear grew ever wilder and more powerful. The rattling of the chain and the cries of the girl mingled with Ibrahim's growling. The neighbors began to wake up. Human voices, confused questionings, were heard. The inn-keeper and his servants appeared on the scene in their night clothes, but, hearing the terrible roaring, fled again into security. The Captain's cries for help became weaker and weaker. And now Joco took his iron stake, which he always kept by him, opened the door, and at one bound was at the side of the wild beast. His voice sounded again like thunder, and the iron stick fell with a thud on the bear's back. Ibrahim had smelt blood. Beneath his paws a man's mangled body was writhing. The beast could hardly be made to let go his prey. In the light that came through the small window, Joco soon found the chain from which not long before he had freed Ibrahim, and with a swift turn he put the muzzle over the beast's jaws. It was done in a twinkling. During this time Zorka had been running up and down the empty yard, crying in vain for help. Nobody had dared come near.

The following day Captain Fritz Winter, Ritter von Wallishausen, was lying between burning wax candles upon his bier. Nobody could be made responsible for the terrible accident. Why did he go to the bears when he was not sober?

But that very day the siren of Bosnia danced her wild dance again in the next village, and with her sweet, melodious voice urged the light-colored little bear: "Mariska, jump, jump!"

Arthur Elck

The Tower Room

THERE were many wonderful things that aroused our childish fantasy, when Balint Orzo and I were boys, but none so much as the old tower that stands a few feet from the castle, shadowy and mysterious. It is an old, curious, square tower, and at the brink of its notched edge there is a shingled helmet which was erected by one of the late Orzos.

There is many and many a legend told about this old tower. A rumor exists that it has a secret chamber into which none is permitted to enter, except the head of the family. Some great secret is concealed in the tower-room, and when the first-born son of the Orzo family becomes of age his father takes him there and reveals it. And the effect of the revelation is such that every young man who enters that room comes out with gray hair.

As to what the secret might be, there was much conjecturing. One legend had it that once some Orzo imprisoned his enemies in the tower and starved them until the unfortunates ate each other in their crazed suffering. According to another story Kelemen Orzo ordered his faithless wife Krisztina Olaszi to be plastered into the wall of the room. Every night since, sobbing is heard from the tower.

Another runs that every hundred years a child with a dog's face is born in the Orzo family and that this little monster has to perish in the tower-room, so as to hide the disgrace of the family.

Another conjecture was that once the notorious Menyhart Orzo, who was supreme under King Rudolph in the castle, played a game of checkers with his neighbor, Boldizsar

Zomolnoky. They commenced to play on a Monday and continued the game and drank all week until Sunday morning dawned upon them. Then Menyhart Orzo's confessor came and pleaded with the gamblers. He begged them to stop the game on the holy day of Sunday, when all true Christians are in church praising the Lord. But Menyhart, bringing his fist down on the table in such rage that all the wine glasses and bottles danced, cried: "And if we have to sit here till the world comes to an end, we won't stop till we have finished this game!"

Scarcely had he uttered his vow when, somewhere from the earth, or from the wall, a thundering voice was heard promising to take him at his word—that they would continue playing till the end of the world. And ever since, the checkers are heard rattling, and the two damned souls are still playing the game in the tower-room.

When we were boys, the secret did not give us any rest, and we were always discussing and plotting as to how we could discover it. We made at least a hundred various plans, but all failed. It was an impossibility to get into the tower, because of a heavy iron-barred oaken door. The windows were too high to be reached. We had to satisfy ourselves with throwing a well-aimed stone, which hit the room through the window. Such an achievement was somewhat of a success, for oftentimes we drove out an alarmed flock of birds.

One day I decided that the best way would be to find out the secret of the tower from Balint's father himself. "He is the head of the family," I thought, "and if any light is to be had on the mystery, it is through him." But Balint didn't like the idea of approaching the old man; he knew his father's temper.

However, once he ventured the question, but he was sorry for it afterwards, for the older Orzo flew into a passion, and scolded and raged, ending by telling him that he must not listen to such nursery-tales; that the tower was moldering and decaying with age; that the floor timbers and staircase were so infirm that it would fall to pieces should anyone approach it; and that this was why no one could gain admittance.

For a long time afterwards neither of us spoke of it.

But curiosity was incessantly working within us, and one evening Balint solemnly vowed to me that as soon as he became of age and had looked into the room, he would call for me, should I be even at the end of the world, and would let me into the secret. In order to make it more solemn, we called this a "blood-contract."

With this vow we parted. My parents sent me to college; Balint had a private tutor and was kept at home in the castle. After that we only met at vacation time.

Eight years passed before I saw the Orzo home again. At Balint's urgent, sudden invitation I had hurriedly journeyed back to my rocky fatherland.

I had scarcely stepped on the wide stone stairway leading from the terrace in the front of the castle, when someone shouted that the honorable master was near! He came galloping in on a foaming horse. I looked at him and started, as if I had seen a ghost, for this thin, tall rider was the perfect resemblance of his father. The same knotty hair and bearded head, the same densely furrowed face, the same deep, calm, gray eyes. And his hair and beard were almost as white as his father's!

He came galloping through the gate, pulled the bridle with a sudden jerk, and the next moment was on the paving; then with one bound he reached the terrace, and had me in his strong arms. With wild eagerness he showed me into the castle and at the same time kept talking and questioning me without ceasing. Then he thrust me into my room and declared that he gave me fifteen minutes—no more—to dress.

The time had not even expired, when he came, like a whirlwind, embraced me again and carried me into the dining-room. There chandeliers and lamps were already lit; the table was elaborately decorated, and bore plenty of wine.

At the meal he spoke again. Nervously jerking out his words, he was continually questioning me on one subject and then another, without waiting for the answer. He laughed often and harshly. When we came to the drinking, he winked to the servants, and immediately five Czigany musicians entered the room. Balint noticed the astonishment on my face, and half evasively said:

"I have sent to Iglo for them in honor of you. Let the music sound, and the wine flow; who knows when we will see each other again?"

He put his face into his palm. The Cziganys played old Magyar songs. Balint glanced at me now and then, and filled the glasses; we clinked them together, but he always seemed to be worried.

It was dawning. The soft sound of a church bell rose to us. Balint put his hand on my shoulder and bent to my ear.

"Do you know how my father died?" he asked in a husky voice. "He killed himself."

I looked at him with amazement; I wanted to speak, but he shook his head, and grasped my hand.

"Do you remember my father?" he asked me. Of course; while I looked at him it seemed as if his father were standing before me. The very fibrous, skinny figure, the muscles and flesh seeming peeled off. Even through his coat arm I felt the naked, unveiled nerves.

"I always admired and honored my father, but we were never true intimates; I knew that he loved me, but I felt as if it was not for my own sake; as if he loved something in my soul that was strange to me. I never saw him smile; sometimes he was so harsh that I was afraid of him; at another time he was unmanageable.

"I did not understand him, but the older I became the better did I feel that there was a sad secret germinating in the bottom of his soul, where it grew like a spreading tree, the branches of which crept up to the castle and covered the walls, little by little overshadowed the sunlight, absorbed the air, and darkened everyone's heart. I gritted my teeth in vain; I could not work; I could not start to accomplish anything. I struggled with hundreds and hundreds of determinations; to-day I prepared for this or that; to-morrow for something else; ambition pressed me within; I could not make up my mind. Behind every resolution I made, I noticed my father's countenance, like a note of interrogation. The old fables that we heard together in our childhood were renewed in my memory. Little by little the thought grew within me, like a fixed delusion, that my father's fatal secret was locked up in the tower room. After that I lived by the calendar and dwelt on the passing of time on the clock. And when the sun that shone on me when I was born arose the twenty-fourth time, I pressed my hand on my heart and entered my father's room—this very room.

"'Father,' I said, 'I became of age to-day, everything may be opened before me, and I am at liberty to know everything.' Father looked at me and pondered over this.

"'Oh, yes!' he whispered, 'this is the day.'

"'I may know everything now,' continued I; 'I am not afraid of any secrets. In the name of our family tradition, I beg of you, please open the tower-room.'

"Father raised his hand, as if he wanted to make me become silent. His face was as white as a ghost.

"'Very well,' he murmured, 'I will open the tower-room for you.'

"And then he pulled off his coat, tore his shirt on his breast, and pointed to his heart.

"'Here is the tower-room, my boy!' did he whisper in a husky voice. 'Here is the tower-room, and within our family secret. Do you see it?'

"That is all he said, but when I looked at him I immediately perceived the secret; everything was clear before me and I had a presentiment that something was nearing its end, something about to break.

"Father walked up and down; and then he stopped and pointed to this picture; to this very picture.

"'Did you ever thoroughly look at your ancestors? They are all from the Orzos. If you scrutinize their faces you will recognize in them your father, yourself, and your grandfather; and if you ever read their documents, which were left to us—there they are in the box—then you will know that they are just the same material as we are. Their way of thinking was the same as ours and so were their desires, their wills, their lives, and deaths. We had among them soldiers, clergymen, scientists, but not even one great, celebrated man, although their talent, their strength almost tore them asunder.

"'In every one of them the family curse took root: not one of them could be a great man, neither my father nor yours.'

"Then I felt as if something horrible was coming from his lips. My breath almost ceased. Father did not finish what he was going to say, but stopped and listened for a minute.

"'I was my father's only hope,' he went on after a while; 'I too was born talented and prepared for great things, but the Orzos' destiny overtook me, and you see now what became of me. I looked into the tower-room. You know what it contains? You know what the name of our secret is? He who saw this secret lost faith in himself. For him it would have been better not to have come into this world at all. But I loved to live and did not want to abandon all my hopes. I married your mother; she consoled me until you were born, and then I regained my delight in life. I knew what I had to keep before my eyes to bring up my son to be such a man as his father could not be.

"'I acquiesced when you left for the foreign countries; then your letters came. I made a special study of every sentence and of every word of it, for I did not want to trust my reason. I thought the first time that the fault was in me; that I saw unnecessary phantoms. But it wasn't so, for what I read out of your words was our destiny, the curse of the Orzos; from the way of your thinking, I found out that everything is in vain; you too turned your head backward, you too looked into yourself and noticed there the thing that makes the perceiver sterile forever. You did not even notice what you have done; you could not grasp it with your reason, but the poison is already within you.'

"'It cannot be, father!' I broke out, terrified.

"But he sadly shook his head. 'I am old; I cannot believe in anything now. I wish you were right, and would never come to know what I know. God bless you, my son; it is getting late, and I am getting tired.'

"It struck me that he was trying to cover his disbelief with sarcasm. Both of us were without sleep that night. At dawn there was silence in his room. I bitterly thought, 'When will I go to rest?' When I went into his room in the morning he was lying in his bed. All was over. He had taken poison, and written his farewell on a piece of paper. His last wish was that no one should ever know under what circumstances he died."

Balint left off speaking and gazed with outstretched eyes toward the window in the darkness. I slowly went to him and put my hand upon his shoulder. He started at my touch.

"I more than once thought of the woman who could be the mother of my son. How many times have I been tempted to fulfill my father's last wish! But at such a time it has always come to my mind that I too might have such a son, who would cast into his father's teeth that he was a coward and a selfish man; that he sacrificed a life for his illusive hopes.

"No! I won't do it. I won't do it. I am the last of the Orzos. With me this damned family will die out. My fathers were cowards and rascals. I do not want anybody to curse my memory."

I kissed Balint's wet forehead; I knew that this was the last time I would see him. The next day I left the castle, and the day after, his death was made public. He committed suicide, like his father. He was the last Orzo, and I turned about the coat of arms above his head.

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